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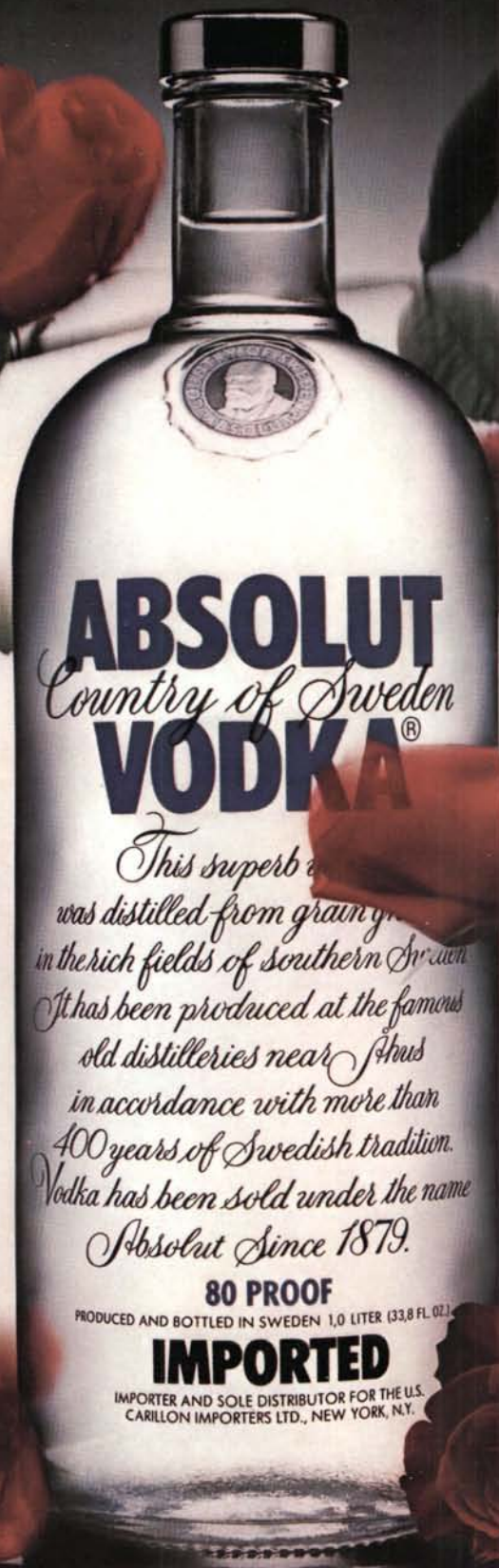
ZEITGEIST GODDESS

BARBARA EHRENREICH ON ROSEANNE BARR

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page 28.

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 3,924

- 4 MICHAEL KINSLEY TRB: VOTERS IN CHAINS** Congressional term limits? No thanks.
- 6 CORRESPONDENCE** Death and *The New Yorker*, Nietzsche and Nazism, &c.
- 7 THE EDITORS THREE LITTLE WORDS** With a phrase, George Bush managed to sabotage the whole Mideast peace process. **POWER TOOLS** The new authority Gorbachev has arranged for himself isn't just for show. **NOTEBOOK** Sullivan's doubtful figures, &c.
- 9 JAMES BLITZ PRESIDENT'S THORN** Sergei Stankevich, the lawyer-politician who helped water down Gorbachev's bid for new powers, is a believer in local democracy.
- 10 FRED BARNES NON-REALIGNMENT** The Republicans' latest scheme to wrest control of Congress from the Democrats is a pretty long shot.
- 12 MORTON KONDRACKE TRADE GALES** The economic war with Japan we've been dreading for years is finally about to begin.
- 14 DAVID CORN DIRTY BOOKKEEPING** Before he started playing blackjack with little old ladies' money, Charles Keating was avidly opposed to indecent literature.
- 16 ROBERT KUTTNER WHAT'S THE BEEF?** If the Democratic Leadership Council would quit beating up on its old enemies, it might find they're its friends.
- 19 OWEN HARRIES REVOLUTION REDUX** The historical precedent for the remarkable events of 1989 is 1848, the year the Hapsburg empire shook.
- 22 JOHN HORGAN YOUR ANALYSIS IS FAULTY** How drug warrior J. Michael Walsh uses phony statistics to make the case for workplace testing.
- 26 STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS: HUMAN NATURES** *Lord of the Flies* doesn't fly.
- 28 BARBARA EHRENREICH THE WRETCHED OF THE HEARTH** Roseanne Barr is the ultimate unladylike feminist: very large, and very radical. Her spiel can be crude, but so is the exploitation she exposes. She's the big-mouthed champion of working-class women.
- 30 CARL DENNIS POEM** *Oedipus the King*
- 31 DAVID RIEFF THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION NOVEL** *Mile Zero* by Thomas Sanchez
- 34 MAX LERNER THE SPIRIT AND THE LAWS** *Honorable Justice: The Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes* by Sheldon M. Novick
- 37 G. W. BOWERSOCK THE DAWN OF READING** *Oral Tradition & Written Record in Classical Athens* by Rosalind Thomas; *Ancient Literacy* by William V. Harris
- 39 JEFFERY PAINE MADE IN AMERICA** *Fabricating Lives: Explorations in American Autobiography* by Herbert Leibowitz
- 42 JAMES ATLAS NEW YORK DIARIST: CORPORATE POPULIST** Getting deconstructed proves more baffling than painful.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Voters in chains

Does the public think that incumbent members of Congress get re-elected too easily and serve too long? Supporters of a constitutional amendment that would restrict U.S. representatives and senators to twelve years of service point to a recent Gallup Poll indicating that seventy percent of Americans favor limits on congressional tenure. Without irony, they also point with alarm to the fact that ninety-eight percent of incumbents got re-elected in 1988, often by large margins, including many whose tenures exceeded twelve years. The poll results they acclaim as vox populi. The actual election results they de-

ride as illustrating the problem.

The late Ferdinand Marcos once canceled a presidential election in the Philippines on the grounds that an opinion poll indicated that the people didn't want one. At the time I thought that was the ultimate exercise in opinion-poll democracy. But this is even better: citing a poll both as superior to past elections and as a reason to foreclose future ones.

Americans to Limit Congressional Terms is one of those pre-fab interest groups that can now be put together overnight with stationery, fancy p.r. folder, "National Advisory Board" of distinguished has-beens, and so on. It is run out of a Republican political consultant's office and, despite the support of a few token Democrats, is basically an expression of Republican frustration at the Democratic dominance of Congress over the past few decades. Many people seem to believe that whereas the apparent Republican lock on the White House is a mandate, the apparent Democratic lock on Congress is a scandal.

It wasn't long ago that Republicans wanted to repeal the 22nd Amendment (1951), which limits presidents to two terms. That one was also a Republican creation—an expression of frustration at the long tenure of FDR. In the glorious afternoon of the Reagan years, they came to regret it. Their argument for repeal is

the same one made by opponents of congressional term limits: in a democracy, people should be able to vote for whom-ever they want. Anybody who thinks extended incumbency is undesirable can vote against the incumbent.

The term-limit debate quickly veers away from such first principles into the realm of poli sci. Advocates say that foreclosing Congress as a permanent career would prevent members from "going Washington" and assure a regular influx of fresh citizen-legislators. Opponents say it would only increase the power of the permanent Washington bureaucracy. Republican Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois, an opponent, worries that people would run for office only near the beginning and the end of their adult lives, denying the nation the fruitful energies of those creative middle years.

Republican Senator Gordon Humphrey of New Hampshire, who is sponsoring the proposed amendment, says it would obviate Congress's repeated pay-raise agonies. I'm not sure I see how, unless those new citizen-legislators are all rich, or unless they all go through the revolving door into Washington lobbying after their twelve-year training program.

Opponents also challenge the notion that there is a "permanent" Congress. Despite the high re-election rate of incumbents who choose to run, over half the Congress is new since 1980. Despite PACs and other modern election horrors, the turnover rate is about the same as it always was. *Roll Call*, the Capitol Hill newspaper, notes tartly that half the former members of Congress on the masthead of Americans to Limit Congressional Terms are "former" because they lost their own bids for re-election.

Humphrey is following his own advice and retiring at the end of his current, second, term. The same cannot be said of other supporters of the term limit, such as Senator Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich, both of whose twelve years are coming up. Humphrey's amendment would make an exception for past and current terms of current members of Congress. "I hope this provision will make the proposal more palatable," he says dryly.

The mere fact that a term limit would make the American political system less directly democratic is not a definitive argument against it. Our constitutional system is full of hedges against democracy starting with the notion of representative democracy itself: the will of the people expressing itself through elected representatives, not directly. The cumbersome process for amending the Constitution is another example. As long as the system itself rests on the consent of the governed, which ours does, there is nothing

continued on page 4 i

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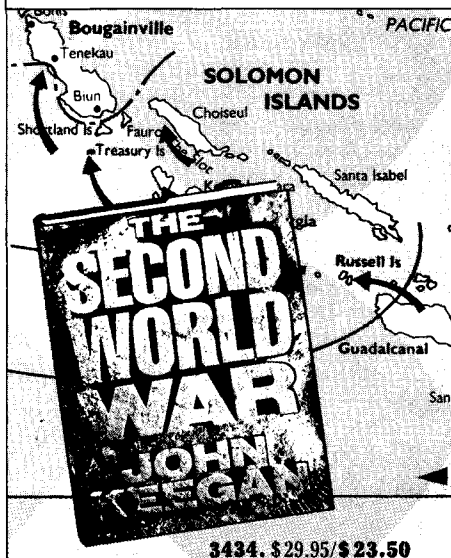
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Editors' Recommendation

"Starved of reinforcements and supplies, the Japanese garrison of Guadalcanal now began to falter. The island was plagued by leeches, tropical wasps and malarial mosquitoes, and as rations dwindled the Japanese troops fell prey to disease. The Americans too became ill—pilots at Henderson Field lasted only thirty days before losing the quickness of hand and eye necessary to do battle—but the tide of battle was now running their way. In January 1943 the Japanese commander on Guadalcanal withdrew his headquarters to the neighboring island of Bougainville. In early February the "Tokyo Express" began to operate in reverse, evacuating the sickly and exhausted defenders to New Guinea. By 9 February Japanese resistance on Guadalcanal had formally ceased." —From *The Second World War*

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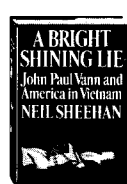
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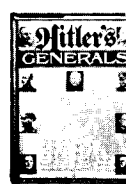
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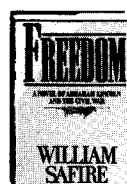
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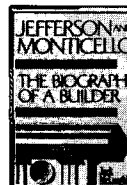
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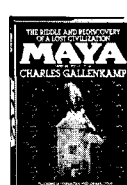
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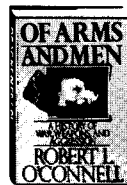
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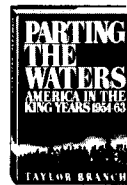
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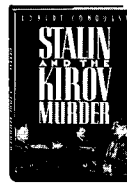
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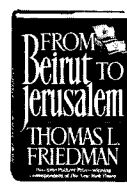
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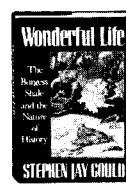
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CORRESPONDENCE

A friend dies

To the editors:

Although Louis Menand's "A Friend Writes" (February 26) purports to be a history of *The New Yorker*, no mention is made of Robert Gottlieb, who replaced William Shawn as editor. It is difficult to see how Menand could deal with the imminent demise of Eustace Tilley without mentioning Gottlieb. After all, his being chosen as only the third editor of *The New Yorker* in seventy years was greeted with all the fanfare of a presidential inauguration, with accompanying platitudes about "change" and "a new era."

Gottlieb is now into his fourth year as editor, and there are signs that he has not only made little impact but that he is responsible for the further decline in the magazine, a decline that began with the Shawn regime.

In his last paragraph Menand says, "*The New Yorker's* market is still there, but it's wearing a different face. Maybe the magazine will put on another face to meet it." This statement is disturbing in two ways: it suggests that in order to sur-

vive *The New Yorker* must, in its editorial policy, adjust to market forces; and it refers to "the magazine" rather than Robert Gottlieb. After all, at *The New Yorker* the editor is the magazine. Yet no one seems to know what Gottlieb's editorial policy is or if he sees his role as nothing more than a caretaker who stands by and watches Eustace Tilley go under.

BURLING LOWREY
Washington, D.C.

Christian humility

To the editors:

I must say Morton Kondracke stacks the deck against secularists quite elegantly in his Washington Diarist ("Sermons," February 5). Whereas Christians receive credit not only for the good they do but also for the good everyone does in countries where they're allowed to roam free, secularists receive no credit for their part in forming democratic institutions, or for purely secular enterprises such as science and medicine. Also, Christians take the blame only for evils directly linked to religion.

Secularism is identified solely with systems that outlaw religion altogether, which means tyrannical ones by definition, even though religious liberty is a key humanist ideal (often brought in

over the strong objections of Christian sects, I might add). Secularists are identified with Nazism and communism even though these systems are as violently and explicitly opposed to humanist ideals as they are to Christian ones, and in the case of Nazism far more explicitly. Whereas Kondracke mitigates the evils done by religious fanatics by saying that Christ didn't intend them, he says nothing about the intentions of Karl Marx. And that really is the crux of the matter: secularists are judged by their acts, Christians by their intentions.

ROBERT FIORE
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:

Morton Kondracke has it all wrong when he says that "Nazism derived its intellectual underpinnings from Nietzsche." The author of *Zarathustra* may have been half-mad in his elitism, but it is a matter of fact that he spent his career disparaging and repudiating proto-Nazi beliefs, like fanatical Germanism and anti-Semitism (see Fritz Stern's *The Politics of Cultural Despair*).

Nietzsche often scoffed at fanatical misuses of his own thought, and occasionally decried them in public. I don't point this out because I am a particular admirer of Nietzsche, but because it shows again that arguments about links between religion and good government are very often, as with Kondracke's based on broad simplicities about human nature and famous people who have thought about it.

PETER PAUL FUCHS
Washington, D.C.

Gorbo's mania

To the editors:

Fred Barnes (Washington Diarist "Gorby's Demons," February 12) rightly observes that Mikhail Gorbachev has been buffeted "by historical forces large and small," but his conclusion that Gorbachev is "the most overrated man in the world" undervalues the vision needed to respond skillfully, humanely, or even reasonably to the tides of history. Critic a decade ago similarly deprecated Anwar Sadat's pioneering overtures to Jerusalem as merely the rational pursuit of Egypt's enlightened self-interest—as if rationality and a grasp of enlightened self-interest were commonplace in the Middle East, or anywhere else in the world. If they were, historians might now be explaining such "inevitable" developments as Herbert Hoover's New Deal; Lyndon Johnson's de-escalation in South Vietnam in 1965; Richard Nixon's shrewd confession of error in 1972; and

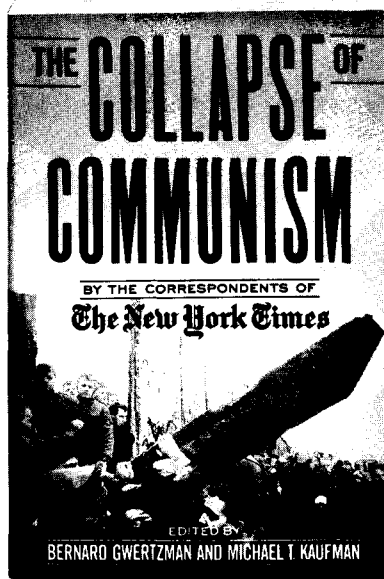
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THREE LITTLE WORDS

A fool or a knave? Friends of peace in the Middle East, not to mention the professional "peace process" class, are divided about George Bush's reasons for scuttling months of American diplomacy, setting back Hosni Mubarak's mediation between Israel and the Palestinians, abetting Yitzhak Shamir's efforts to slip away from the Palestinian problem, and embarrassing Shimon Peres's efforts to prevent Shamir from slipping away from it. All this the president did with the words "and East Jerusalem."

Or, more precisely, "in the West Bank and East Jerusalem." Those are the regions under Israeli rule from which the administration would like new Soviet immigrants to Israel barred. Bush, who prides himself on his talent for foreign affairs, was renewing American opposition to Israeli settlement in the occupied territories, an old and perfectly understandable policy of American governments since 1967. Then, suddenly and unaccountably, he betrayed his view that East Jerusalem is no different from Nablus or Hebron, that there should be no difference between the fate of Jerusalem and the fate of the territories.

Immediately, in Israel and in the United States, a storm broke: Bush had committed a staggering tactical blunder, the first rule for the start of Arab-Israeli diplomacy is to leave Jerusalem for last, and so on. All very true: peace in this permanently inflamed and increasingly immobile region will require small step after small step after small step; and on each of these small steps hangs the whole. The suspicions that Bush stirred in Israel last week will echo quite properly through all of Israeli diplomacy. When American officials speak of saving Jerusalem for later in the process, is it only to null, or even to fool, Israel for now?

But the President's utterance is not merely a matter of tactics. It is a matter of history, too, and of justice. In the nineteen tense years between 1948, when the State of Israel was created and was attacked by the combined might of Arab countries (they would not be satisfied with the State of Palestine that the United Nations had created alongside the State of Israel, and that the Jews had accepted), and 1967, when it was attacked again, Israel sent no troops across its border to conquer the

Arab precincts of Jerusalem. Instead it watched from not very far away as Jews were denied access to the holy sites of Judaism, and Jewish cemeteries and synagogues were vandalized and destroyed. In 1967 Israel captured East Jerusalem, and the old city of all the faiths, by way of saving its own skin. The Israeli flag that flies over the unified city of Jerusalem is proof not of imperialism, but of its opposite: of successful self-defense. The spell that Jerusalem casts over Muslims is not hard to understand, which is why the city's Muslim shrines have flourished under Israeli rule; but if the Arabs cared so desperately to maintain Arab dominion over the city, they should not have risked a war of annihilation.

They lost the war, and so they lost the city. It is a little bizarre to watch an administration that fetishizes the postwar borders of Europe treat the postwar borders of Israel so blithely. The security risks around the latter borders are surely much greater than the security risks around the former ones. And who are the Americans (or the Arabs) who will deny that wars have spoils? No, the 1967 borders are not sacred, and for the sake of real peace, and of a genuine political settlement with the Palestinians, territorial compromise is the beginning of wisdom. Half of Israel is historically committed to territorial compromise for peace. Those Israelis are prepared to surrender a great deal; but they are not prepared, they will never be prepared, to surrender everything. They are right on both counts. They did not fight wars to make their lives less secure or less honorable. Many hearts stir for Jerusalem, but no hearts stir more than Jewish hearts. If the faith and the memory of Jews have an incarnation in a place, it is this city.

The president's three little words represent, then, not merely a faulty grasp of diplomacy, but a faulty grasp of the moral and historical realities of America's ally in this conflict. Israel's friends are correct to be rattled. Those three words were also the greatest gift that Bush could have made to Shamir. Perhaps the president had not been briefed on the recent convulsion in the Likud, which was the result of Ariel Sharon's demagogic attempt to challenge Shamir precisely on



the issue of Jerusalem. As James Baker can confirm to Bush, Shamir was running out of dodges—he was on the verge of agreeing to the American-Egyptian conditions for an Israeli-Palestinian meeting, which included Palestinian representation from East Jerusalem. (A “second address” in East Jerusalem was the compromise, but the effect would have been the same: a Palestinian politician with a house on the West Bank and an apartment in East Jerusalem—Faisal Husseini, for example—could have shown up.)

Just as Baker’s plan was about to bear fruit, in other words, Bush shot off his mouth, and on exactly the subject that will line up most Israelis behind the Likud. Nice work. Now the Israeli government has broken down over the Baker plan, and over Bush’s provocation. You may be sure that the Likud will not let slip this opportunity to batten on the Jerusalem question in the streets. But neither will Labor split the difference with Likud on Jerusalem. There is no difference to split. If the Bush administration’s slog toward a breakthrough in the Middle East fails, it will have nobody to blame but itself. Which is to say, it will almost certainly blame Israel.

POWER TOOLS

What’s the difference, goes a current Moscow joke, between America and the Soviet Union? In America Mikhail Gorbachev would be elected president.

Well, Mikhail Gorbachev, having just completed his fifth year in power, actually has been elected president—not of the United States but of the Soviet Union, and not, of course, by popular ballot. His electorate was the Congress of People’s Deputies, where new-style dissenters do some of the talking (see “President’s Thorn” by James Blitz, page 9) but old-style Communists still do most of the voting. The people have been put off with a promise that they can choose their president themselves five years hence. In the meantime, Gorbachev will have been vested with a degree of one-man authority not seen, his parliamentary critics say, since the days of Stalin.

Gorbachev’s new powers are presumably not just for show. And as the Soviet Union’s multiple crises continue to worsen, he will be tempted ever more strongly to use them. Sanctioned by an embryonic legal structure whose legitimacy hovers in a netherworld somewhere between Gaullism and Leninism, he will be able legally to break a strike or shut down a newspaper. The question remains whether such authority can help establish the pluralist coherence without which the Soviet Union will wither, its economy in ruins, its institutions discredited, and its subject peoples insisting, like the Lithuanians, upon going their own way.

In any case, Gorbachev’s new dispensation won’t easily change the conclusion of Western banks and West-

ern suppliers that the Soviets are a bad risk: after an initial spurt of competitive enthusiasm for making loans to Moscow, financial institutions in the United States and Europe have just about withdrawn from this market. Japanese banks still seem willing, but Japanese terms can only exacerbate the hard currency hemorrhage that has already depleted the Soviet economy. Many producers of materials needed to sustain Soviet industry have simply stopped delivering their goods. Suppliers of critical chemicals have not been paid for almost six months. That’s warning enough for them and for others.

Gorbachev seems to have fixed on a startling means of easing his country’s cash crisis: he has floated the notion that if Lithuania wants out it will have to pay the Soviet Union compensation of \$34 billion, not in rubles but in real money. The demand of an exiting imperial power for reparations is a true historical novelty. With equal gall—and with rather more justice—the Dutch might demand retributive billions from the Indonesians, the French somewhat less from the Algerians, the British somewhat more from the Indians.

In the Soviet Union’s convulsive lurch for what its leaders rather touchingly call “normality,” the pattern remains what it has been ever since Gorbachev began to show himself different from his predecessors: glasnost is mostly a success, perestroika mostly a failure. But one aspect of the latter that has in some sense “worked” has been the opening up of the political system. The clumsy combination of the Congress of People’s Deputies and the Supreme Soviet does function as a legislature of sorts and as a forum for genuine debate. As the Communist Party’s devolution proceeds, the Congress/Supreme Soviet is increasingly wheeled into place as the basis for legitimacy. Compared with five years ago, this is progress. So is the Kremlin’s response to the independence movements in the Baltics, which is not to send in the tanks but to haggle over price. But Gorbachev now seems to be drifting back toward authoritarian shortcuts. Subject nations from Asia to the Ukraine, which Gorbachev feels freer to treat harshly, are stirring. And the Soviet economy remains an inert, continent-sized lump that could end by choking the whole beast.

NOTEBOOK

SOCIAL SMOKING: Good for Louis Sullivan for following in the footsteps of C. Everett Koop with a public campaign against smoking. If the health and human services secretary can give another push to the downward trend in the number of Americans who are addicted to cigarettes, he’ll have done the country a great service. But he’ll undermine his own case if he’s not more careful with numbers. At the launch of his tobacco-free America drive in February, Sullivan claimed that an end to smoking could save \$52 billion a year in lower health costs and increased productivity. A story by Malcolm Gladwell in *The Washington Post* suggests that the figure is wholly mis-

leading. If millions kick the habit, it will actually cost society money. The explanation for this is that the Social Security system is effectively subsidized by smokers who pay in for their whole working lives and then die young (four years younger on average than non-smokers), before collecting as much as they contributed. One study cited in the *Post* story puts the pension program's potential liability in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Medicare would probably bear an increased burden as well: many smokers now die while they're covered by private health insurance. If they quit and lived longer as a result, more of their expenses would be covered by the government. It's tempting, in the present budgetary climate, to sell everything as a money-saving measure. But some things are worth doing even if they cost. Sullivan shouldn't be afraid to promote health and longevity as ends in themselves, without resort to farfetched claims about their financial side-effects.

AMBIPOINDEXTEROUS:

*Testimony Offers Former Security Adviser
Some Small Comfort, but Greater Danger*

—*The New York Times*, February 24

Reagan on Tape May Be Poindexter's Best Witness

—*The Washington Post*, same day

President Gorbachev vs. Deputy Stankevich.

PRESIDENT'S THORN

by *James Blitz*

MOSCOW

Sergei Stankevich is thirty-six and looks twenty. He wears jeans and sneakers. He has bright eyes, fair hair, and a boyish smile. But don't be deceived by his youthfulness. Few people lately have irritated Mikhail Gorbachev as much as he has. Both in the Congress of People's Deputies, the 2,250-member superlegislature that meets for a few days a year, and in the Supreme Soviet, the smaller year-round working legislature, Stankevich is a leading light of the Inter-Regional Group of reformist politicians. In the past few weeks he has been raising both his voice and his profile. His target has been Gorbachev's plan to extend his powers as president of the country. His weapon has been a formidable background as an academic specializing in constitutional law.

When I interviewed Stankevich in his cramped office

on the outskirts of Moscow a few days before the opening of the current session of the Congress of People's Deputies, he was convinced that his faction's efforts to rein in Gorbachev's proposed new powers were doomed to fail. "There has never been any real possibility that the Congress will amend the bill," he told me, "because the membership is too conservative and too open to the influence of Gorbachev and the wishes of the Communist Party leadership."

But when the session convened, Stankevich got a pleasant surprise. Because Gorbachev needed a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, and because the total number of deputies has been reduced by deaths, absentees, and the withdrawal of the Lithuanians, a 525-vote minority could, in theory, have stymied him. This gave the radical democrats some negotiating muscle, and they used it to pry loose some important concessions. Gorbachev had sought the untrammelled power to declare martial law or states of emergency anywhere in the country; now he will have to consult the locality concerned, and he will need the approval of two-thirds of the central Supreme Soviet. Also, presidential vetoes and decrees will be subject to override by a two-thirds majority in the Supreme Soviet; Gorbachev had wanted the right to appeal such overrides to the full Congress. "Our Congress, our Supreme Soviet, became really stronger today," Stankevich was quoted as saying after the day's session. Even so, Gorbachev got most of the powers he wanted, and the next day he got what he wanted even more: the right to be elected to a five-year term by the Congress, postponing any popular presidential election until 1995. Stankevich was not even allowed to present his alternative proposal for a three-year interim presidency before popular elections.

The overall result is that Gorbachev will end up as—technically—the most powerful Soviet leader since Stalin. But the country's rambunctious political atmosphere and the powers of its liberalized mass media mean that in practice he will not be able to rule in Stalinist fashion even if he develops an inclination to do so. The new atmosphere was symbolized by the astonishingly close vote by which the Congress approved the principle of a one-time, five-year, unelected presidential term: fewer than fifty votes out of more than 2,000. To stop the trend toward legal norms and ever more radical political change would now require nothing less than a Bonapartist coup d'état.

There is another consolation for Stankevich. In the debates on the issue, he has established himself as one of the new jewels in the radical crown. He has a command of the intricacies of constitutional law unrivaled by any other member of the Inter-Regional Group of radical deputies, led by the maverick Boris Yeltsin. And he has displayed his knowledge at Supreme Soviet sessions with a speaking style that is cool and sharp.

But he and Yeltsin are different breeds of politician, even if they share the same commitment to radical reform. From the beginning of his career, Yeltsin was

climbing the Communist Party ladder and forcing himself to get along with officials whom he would later disown. Stankevich is of purer stock. In the last years of the stagnant era of Leonid Brezhnev, he kept his head down and his mouth shut. He only joined the Communist Party in 1987, when the new and more open political atmosphere was established. And he didn't walk onto the big political stage until he won election to the Congress of People's Deputies last year.

For Stankevich and the rest of the Inter-Regional Group, Gorbachev's motives are to some degree understandable. Someone has to hold the country together as the Azeris kill Armenians, the Balts make unilateral declarations of independence, the economy goes to ruin, and the Communist Party collapses. "In sum, Gorbachev wants these new presidential powers because the political system is disintegrating," he told me.

The new local Supreme Soviets, which were elected in the recent regional elections, will be much more active than the Soviets that sat before them. That will lead to conflicts between the parliament in Moscow and the new parliaments in the outlying republics—in the Baltics, Armenia, and Moldavia—on the issue of who has the right to legislate for what. The Lithuanian leadership has already decided that Moscow has no right to legislate over them at all. And other republics are certain to follow.

Since Stankevich's election to the Moscow City Council on March 4 (with a thumping majority), his main goal has been to concentrate on local politics. "Radicals now dominate the Soviets in many cities and districts," he said. "At the local level, we can give people a real taste of change in this country: change in housing policy, change in economic policy, and change in living standards. Our task will be to teach people that our politics at the local level are more democratic than they are in the Kremlin."

In national terms, Stankevich said, Gorbachev wants to ensure that he can control the country after the Communist Party's 28th Congress in July, when the Party will lose much of its administrative authority over the country. Stankevich believes the Communist Party will split in two at the Congress, with the hardliners going in one direction and the radicals, led by Yeltsin, setting up a new Social Democratic Party, committed to extreme reform. The split is already under way. Even now, radical rank-and-file Communists are joining in droves a new party-within-the-Party, called the Democratic Platform movement. It is committed to far more thorough reforms than those that Gorbachev set out in the official Party platform last month. If the Democratic Platform fails to be implemented at the Party Congress in place of the more conservative manifesto agreed to by the Party's leaders, the radicals will break away.

Soviet television has for weeks been furiously preparing the public for the new era of presidential rule. A recent edition of the flagship news program "Seven Days" was dominated by a film about President de

Gaulle of France, accompanied by a lengthy exposition of the presidential system that he set up in the crisis year 1958. "Gorbachev has been very influenced by the de Gaulle experience in drawing up these new powers," says Stankevich. "Like a French president, he wants to defer the day-to-day running of the country to a prime minister whom he will appoint, while he himself retains a huge amount of executive power."

With Gorbachev firmly ensconced for the next five years, the contrast between the center and the periphery will surely widen. So too will the gulf between President Gorbachev and Deputy Stankevich. The compromises Gorbachev was obliged to accept still leave him the power to rule by decree (albeit within limits) and to exercise powers of appointment that are essentially unlimited. By stepping up to his well-armored presidential redoubt, Gorbachev can stand above the battle while the Party fragments far below him. The Congress gave him the essence of what he wanted, but by a chasteningly narrow margin. He can rule. But he must rule as a politician.

JAMES BLITZ is the Moscow correspondent for the London *Sunday Times*.

Republicans dream on.

NON-REALIGNMENT

By Fred Barnes

No snickering please, but Republicans have yet another scheme for seizing control of Congress and dominating American politics. It's the Bush realignment. The 1990 election is unimportant, except for the part it plays in "positioning" (Republican national chairman Lee Atwater's word) the GOP for 1992. That's the year when lots of big things will happen at once. One is reapportionment. Another is the retirement of old congressional bulls eager to pocket campaign funds, which won't be allowed after 1992. Still another is the bigger, more conservative turnout in a presidential year with a popular incumbent President Bush, at the top of the Republican ticket. (OK, Bush's popularity may have faded by then, but this is just a plan, after all.) "If 1992 isn't the last chance [for realignment this century], it's at least the best," insist Mark Nuttle of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC).

It's the only chance. Republicans have been plotting to take over Congress for two decades, and they're no closer than when they started. The Reagan era was supposed to bring realignment. It brought only si-

years of Senate control (1980-86). In the House, Republicans held seventeen more seats when President Reagan arrived in 1981 than when he left eight years later. The Bush era's been no better. Republicans used to gain seats in special House elections to fill vacancies, but in 1989 they were defeated in six of eight, with a net loss of one seat. Today the Democratic edge is 55-45 in the Senate, 257-175 (with three vacancies) in the House. Overturning that won't be easy in 1992, but it's the last opportunity before the millennium.

In 1992, for the first time in twenty years, the congressional election following reapportionment occurs in a presidential year. That means voter turnout will be higher in the most unsettled political year of the decade. There may be as many as eighty open House seats—that is, ones without an incumbent or with an incumbent running in a substantially new district because of reapportionment. Republicans figure to benefit. The old saw about Republicans praying for rain and a low turnout isn't true anymore. Now strategists believe that the higher the turnout, the better for Republican candidates. Why? Because casual voters who go to the polls only every four years tend to be middle-class and lower-middle-class whites aged eighteen to thirty with faint Republican leanings. These voters were pivotal in electing Republican senators in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, North Carolina, and Washington in 1980. Their absence was a major factor in the defeat of all five in 1986, a non-presidential year. In 1992 they'll vote again, giving Republicans a fair chance of capturing the Senate again.

Republican officials insist that polls, focus groups, and close analysis of voting patterns substantiate that casual voters are GOP-inclined by as much as two-to-one. But their evidence isn't overwhelming. The data come from polls in congressional districts and involve a sliver of voters, only twenty percent in some samples. One Republican cites the case of Democratic Representative David Bonior of Michigan. Bonior got sixty-five percent of the vote in 1986, fifty-four percent in 1988. Tom Hofeller, the reapportionment chief for the NRCC, maintains that GOP House candidates do roughly five percent better in presidential years. Democratic Representative Vic Fazio of California, the chairman of the House Democratic group overseeing reapportionment, disputes this. He says Democrats are as likely as not to get a higher percentage in presidential years. He cited himself—a bad example. Fazio got sixty-four percent in 1982, sixty-one percent in 1984, seventy percent in 1986. True, he got ninety-nine percent in 1988, but he ran unopposed.

Reapportionment, based on the 1990 census, is what really intoxicates Republicans. Seventeen or eighteen House seats will shift from the North and Midwest to the Sunbelt, the region of growing Republican strength. Even in states that don't gain or lose seats, lines must be redrawn to ensure districts of equal population. In other words, political uncertainty will reign. This makes the folks who draw the new lines—governors

and state legislators—crucial in Republican plans (in Democratic plans too, obviously). For 1990 the Republican National Committee is concentrating its resources on state races. It has formed a strike force to make sure Republicans control the governorship or at least one house of the legislature in most large states. That's enough to give them "a seat at the table" when redistricting begins, says Atwater's deputy Mary Matalin.

The chief task in 1990 is holding the governorships of California, Texas, and Florida. California will gain six or seven House seats, Texas three, Florida three or four. So who participates in line drawing in these states makes an enormous difference. As it stands now, Republicans have the edge in winning the governor's race in Texas, Democrats are favored in Florida, and California's a toss-up. Republicans are desperate to hold their narrow majorities in the state senates of New York, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, all states where Democrats have a lock on the state assembly and governor's office. There's a chance the GOP might win the Florida Senate this year, even while losing the governor's race, but that's less than fifty-fifty. At best, Republicans will have a toehold in the most populous states, which is more than they had a decade ago in the last reapportionment.

Republicans have another reapportionment tool, the Voting Rights Act. They plan to rely on it to press (in federal court, if necessary) for as many new black and Hispanic seats as possible. These seats would be Democratic, but that's the paradoxical point. To assure the election of a black or Hispanic, new districts will have to be overloaded with minorities, reliable Democrats all. This will make adjacent districts far less Democratic and thus vulnerable to Republican takeover. Sound cynical? It is. Fazio concedes that in Texas, for instance, new Hispanic seats must to be created in Houston and the Rio Grande Valley and another black district in Dallas-Ft. Worth. Unless Texas elects a Democratic governor, he says, the new lines will put several Democratic House members in jeopardy. Republicans certainly hope so. They'll also demand black seats in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and other states, new Hispanic seats in Illinois, Arizona, and California. Benjamin Ginsberg, the RNC's chief counsel, says the number of black seats, now twenty-four, should double in 1992. If anything like that happens, Republicans will gain too.

Republicans are also poised to benefit from campaign reform. Congress voted last year to bar House members from inheriting unspent campaign funds at retirement, unless they quit in 1992. Republicans are counting on twenty or thirty retirements. They're recruiting candidates to run in 1990 against potential retirees so they'll be positioned to win open seats in 1992. For example, they've recruited a state legislator to challenge Democratic Representative Doug Barnard of Georgia this year. Barnard, who had \$527,726 left over after his 1988 race, then announced he will retire

in 1992, just what Republicans wanted. They've recruited candidates to run in 1990 against Democrats Jack Brooks of Texas and Frank Annunzio and William Lipinski of Illinois, figuring a strong challenge this year may produce victory the second time around in 1992.

The problem with this part of the Republican scheme is that few members are likely to retire. Being in the House is too cushy and ego-gratifying. Fazio claims that no more than a dozen will take the money and run. The retirees will include Republicans as well as Democrats. If reapportionment produces eighty open seats in 1992, these won't be all Democratic. Nuttle says two-thirds will be, but other Republican officials think the percentage will be considerably lower. In any case, it's not a pool from which a thirty- to forty-seat Republican pickup in 1992 (Nuttle's target) is going to emerge. Still, it's a far bigger pool of open seats than Republicans will see later in the 1990s, which is why 1992 is the GOP's last chance.

Republicans have abandoned their 1980s game plan of imposing national issues on House races. It only helped Republicans in 1980 when they ran against President Carter and added thirty-three seats. In 1982, during a recession, Democrats ran against Reagan and won twenty-six seats. That dashed GOP dreams of a reapportionment-led realignment in the 1980s. Edward Rollins, the NRCC's executive director, says Republican challengers will have to run individualized, localized campaigns. The problem is that Democratic candidates, ordinarily recruited from state legislatures or local governments, are better at this. To capture Congress, Republicans need an enemy to run against. President Dukakis would have been perfect. Without him to demonize, Republicans will be doing well to match their high-water mark of the last three decades, 192 seats. That would represent a nice pickup, but not realignment. •

The coming storm in U.S.-Japan relations.

TRADE GALES

By Morton Kondracke

Much as George Bush's remark opposing new Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem was used by Israeli hard-liners to clobber his Mideast peace plan, another errant reference—about “telecommunications”—is being used to hammer Bush's new friend in Tokyo, Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu. Bush and Kaifu met for two days in Palm Springs, California, in early March. As is now the custom in U.S.-Japan relations, they came away calling each other by

first names. More important, aides said, Bush attempted to stress to Kaifu that after years of talk, now is the time for Japan to make broad trade concessions, lest disputes in that area undermine the global partnership between the world's two biggest economic powers.

Kaifu brought no new proposals with him and made no deals. Yet when Bush got back to Washington, he said in a speech to the American Electronics Association that the two had talked about disputes over “telecommunications” trade. They hadn't; White House aides say they don't know how the word got into the speech. In Tokyo Kaifu was savaged in the press and by political opponents for allegedly reaching secret agreements with the Americans.

Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, Kaifu was criticized for coming to the United States “prepared only to talk” and not to deal. “Promises were made,” said Senator Max Baucus of Montana, “but every president since Nixon has heard promises of a more open market, and most of those promises have been empty.” Baucus is one of several legislators sponsoring measures to stiffen sanctions—in the form of tariffs or reciprocal market closures—if there is no change in Japanese trade practices.

The dynamics on both sides of the Pacific suggest that for once, warnings of an oncoming crisis in U.S.-Japan relations may not be farfetched. This year or next there really could be a trade war leading to a more general political rupture that would damage both countries and the world economy. In so-called structural impediments talks, the United States is demanding fundamental changes in the way Japanese companies do business. So far, according to U.S. negotiators, the Japanese have given practically nothing. Many American experts believe that Kaifu genuinely wants the kind of pro-consumer reforms the United States is pushing. But the harder Americans push, the more his weak political position is undermined. And yet political forces building in Congress and in the public demand that the administration push ever harder—or else.

“There's been a sea change in American politics,” according to David Smick, publisher of *The International Economy* magazine and a superbly plugged-in observer of U.S.-Japan relations. “In Congress you have to be a Japan-basher or you're considered either a naive idiot or a tool of the Japan lobby. There's no rational middle anymore.” In Japan, meanwhile, industrialists and political leaders still do not take American demands for reform seriously, he said, and those who do favor change feel helpless in trying to overcome a reform-resistant political system. Attempts by Kaifu to win approval for concessions to bring to Bush were rebuffed by old guard politicians in the Liberal Democratic Party. According to Smick, just back from Japan, “Kaifu has only a twenty percent to thirty percent chance of staying in power.”

Some administration officials agree that Kaifu is not long for the premiership. He is leader of the weakest of the LDP's factions, is considered too young (at fifty-

nine) and too junior to be on top, and is resented as a populist interloper in the party's elitist ruling circles. It's said he only got to where he is because all other LDP leaders are tainted by financial or sexual scandal. And party bosses say it wasn't so much Kaifu's mass appeal and consumerism that kept the LDP in power in the February 18 Diet elections as it was the \$3 billion raised by LDP Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa.

Administration observers think the likeliest candidate to replace Kaifu is faction leader Shintaro Abe, who's due in Washington in late March. Smick thinks it's former Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, leader of the LDP's largest faction, who visited in mid-March, played golf with Secretary of State James Baker, and had an hour's conference with Bush, unusual for an out-of-office politician. Baker and Bush emphasized they weren't negotiating with Takeshita and weren't undermining Kaifu's authority, but sent the message again: we need trade concessions or there will be trouble. Seemingly for balance, the White House put it out afterward that "telecommunications" were discussed, even though satellites, superconductors, and forest products—plus structural impediments—are the main subjects of current talks.

The Japanese spokesman accompanying Takeshita said that the former prime minister was "moved and impressed" by Bush's message and expressed awareness of "the emergency of the problem." But will there be movement? Even some administration officials doubt it. On February 22 and 23, U.S. negotiators gave the Japanese detailed lists of major reforms that the United States believes are necessary to open up Japan to foreign products and reduce the \$49 billion Japanese trade surplus. All the proposals, said one negotiator, came from various Japanese studies—calling for, among other things, more public spending on roads, sewers, ports, and airports; repeal of the law that gives small shop-owners a veto over the opening of large retail stores; a strengthening of anti-trust laws so that plaintiffs can win damages from price-fixers; an end to tight crossownership of corporations and exclusion of foreigners; and an opening up of financial markets to U.S. banks and brokerage houses.

According to the U.S. side, Japanese negotiators defended the status quo, repeated demands for U.S. structural change—a smaller budget deficit, a higher U.S. savings rate, and an end to short-term investment patterns—and offered minor administrative changes. Takeshita, similarly, told Bush that a coordinating office on structural questions would be set up in the prime minister's office.

"The Japanese strategy is pretty clear," said one negotiator. "They take your list of twenty items and say, 'OK, what is really important?' If you name five, they say, 'Well, fifteen are unimportant. Now, which of these five are really important?' and when they get you to narrow it down to one, you will spend months haggling over that."

Even though officials deny it, the administration

seems split over whether a crisis in U.S.-Japan relations would be good or bad. In hearings before Congress, officials of the Commerce Department and the U.S. Special Trade Representative's office sound nearly as hard-line on the Japanese as the legislators they are addressing. Meanwhile, officials at the State Department, National Security Council, Office of Management and Budget, and Council of Economic Advisers are eager to avoid a rift, lest it upset the close cooperation the United States has with Japan on defense, economic assistance to Eastern Europe and the Third World, and global economic stability—not to mention job-providing Japanese investment in the United States and purchase of U.S. Treasury bonds to finance the budget deficit.

On the one hand, a peeved negotiator said, "The Japanese are very shrewd. They know that in a crisis the United States always does what it has to do to get its act together. So for years they've been trying to give us just enough to avoid the crisis. If they delay it long enough, they'll have a stranglehold on our economy. We won't be able to do without their computer chips or defense components and won't be able to afford a crisis. So I agree that the United States needs a crisis now, while we still can handle it." On the other hand, U.S. foreign policy officials insist that Japan is changing its policies—albeit slowly—and that angry words and passage of protectionist legislation will only retard desirable action.

Whatever reasonable people may want, the American political calendar suggests that some sort of crisis is imminent. This April, by law, the administration must decide whether to accuse Japan of committing new unfair practices in 1989. Probably, it will. This June final reports are due on 1988 violations, including structural impediments. At the rate things are going, the reports will be hostile, and Japan will react in anger. This summer and fall Congress likely will move to retaliate, and in 1990 election races, Democrats and Republicans will vie with each other to see who can sound more nationalistic at Japan's expense.

Early next year the new Congress will be brimming with protectionist trade proposals, and the administration will be requesting new authority under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the global pact on which the world trading system is now based. That could provide the basis for a battle royal over whether the United States believes in free trade or "managed trade." Democrats are likely to be looking for issues to use against Bush in 1992, and the charge of being "soft on Japan" will be tempting. Bush, under pressure, may get tough with Japan and Japan may get tough back.

How to avoid all this unpleasantness? The United States needs to learn how to produce and export, but Japan needs to learn how to import and consume. Fifty percent of Japanese homes are not connected to sewer systems. Rice still is grown in Tokyo. Japan imports 25 percent less per capita than any other industrial country. Not only is the United States likely to isolate Japan in retaliation, but so will Europe. And we'll all be poorer for it. •

DIRTY BOOKKEEPING

By David Corn

To most Americans who have heard of him, Charles H. Keating Jr. symbolizes the savings and loan crisis. The failure of his freewheeling Lincoln Savings and Loan, the centerpiece of his vast financial universe, is expected to cost taxpayers more than \$2.5 billion. Keating is being pursued in the courts by federal banking regulators, the state of California, and people who purchased bad bonds sold by his thrift. He is under investigation by the FBI, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the IRS. His generous political donations to several U.S. senators—since dubbed the Keating Five—and their intervention on his behalf with banking examiners have prompted a Senate Ethics Committee probe. But for three decades Keating was known primarily for his energetic endeavors to protect the nation's moral standards—as captain of Citizens for Decent Literature, at one time perhaps the most prominent anti-pornography organization in the country.

Keating was a deeply religious young lawyer in Cincinnati when he first organized CDL in 1957. CDL aimed not to blacklist individual books and magazines but to spur local prosecutors, who might lack the will or resources, to enforce local obscenity laws. And Keating spoke publicly on the dangers of pornography. In 1964 he addressed the students of Highland High School in Salt Lake City. "The masters of evil are here," he warned. He reported that he had visited a newsstand in their own town and "picked up various filthy material." He then proceeded to read for the students' benefit excerpts from the books *Lesbian Lust*, *The Gay Boys*, and *Sex Rampage*.

Keating was always looking for new recruits, but CDL was picky and screened potential members. "They should be at least twenty-five, with a family, and with church affiliations," CDL's public relations director told a journalist in 1965. "People who can handle such [explicit] material over an extended period of time without being adversely affected." By 1967 the organization claimed more than 300 chapters nationwide, and by 1969 its honorary committee boasted four U.S. senators and seventy members of the House of Representatives, including future defrocked Speaker Jim Wright and Donald E. "Buz" Lukens, who was convicted last year of contributing to the delinquency of a minor after he was videotaped admitting to a mother that he had had sex with her sixteen-year-old daughter.

Keating was rewarded for his years of fighting against loosening morals by President Richard Nixon, who in

1969 appointed the businessman-lawyer to a vacancy on the Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. Keating's tenure brought him national notoriety. Believing the commission, whose original members had been named by President Lyndon Johnson, to be in the hands of the too lenient, he boycotted public hearings. Then, when the commission was about to file its final report recommending that obscenity laws be repealed and sexual education be promoted, Keating brought suit to delay the publication of the study so his dissent could be appended.

In it he raged against the commission. "Such an advocacy of moral anarchy!" "For those who believe in God," the future high-flying S&L owner and accused bond-scam perpetuator declared, "in His absolute supremacy as the Creator and Lawgiver of life, in the dignity and destiny which He has conferred upon the human person, in the moral code that governs sexual activity—for those who believe in these 'things,' no argument against pornography should be necessary." For the rest, he presented a rambling brief against pornography, waxing on about the difference between sex and love and the effect of erotica on Marcel Proust. Keating linked pornography to marital infidelity, divorce, abortion, and suicide. "Never in the history of modern civilization have we seen more obvious evidence of a decline in public morality than we see today. . . . [O]ne factor has to be the deluge of pornography." Pornography "is intended to arouse the sexual appetite—one of the most volatile appetites of human nature. Once that appetite is aroused, it will seek satisfaction." Like greed, one might suppose.

CDL itself got a little greedy in the 1970s, when it initiated an aggressive direct-mail campaign to raise funds. The standard letter, signed by Keating, usually included a stock description of the founder: "I am an active businessman, but I decided some time ago that I owed it to my family and my country to spend some money and time to try to preserve the moral decency of America." In 1972 CDL claimed 145,000 "Decent Citizens" as contributors. CDL's honorary committee grew, expanding to include Representatives Tip O'Neill, not yet Speaker of the House, and Wilbur Mills, who two years later would be found in a somewhat less-than-decent position with stripper Fanny Fox in Washington's Tidal Basin.

Keating's financing of his battle against indecency attracted the attention of law enforcement officials. In 1974 several states denied CDL—which around then changed its name to Citizens for Decency Through Law—permission to panhandle within their borders, claiming that CDL was spending too much of the money it solicited on administrative expenses. In 1972 CDL had spent \$1.4 million—sixty-seven percent of the money it took in—on administration and fund-raising. (Keating's proclivity toward excess would become apparent in his Lincoln operation, where he used money received from depositors and bond purchasers to award his staff lavish incomes, such as the \$2 million he paid the twenty-six-year-old president of the thrift.) The attorney general of New York state dropped an action against CDL—only when the group agreed to limit fund-raising costs to

thirty-five percent of its draw. Keating promised that CDL would drop its mass-mail solicitations.

Keating's brush with the authorities did not deter CDL from its work. It thrashed *Ingenue*, a fashion magazine for teenage girls, for a feature, "After the First Kiss, Where Do You Go?" CDL objected to the article's advocacy of petting and tongue-kissing. It deplored *Time* and *Newsweek* for running cover stories on *Last Tango in Paris*. "The decent people of America . . . are going to wage a holy, yes, a *holy* war against the merchants of obscenity," Keating predicted. "From this day forward I will not rest, and no one connected with CDL will rest, until every pornographer in America is out of business, in jail, or both."

Keating continued to collect politicians. In 1975 CDL listed eighty representatives as backers, including Wayne Hays, who the next year was revealed to have hired a secretary who couldn't type, and Bill Chappell, who in 1988 lost his re-election bid after being ensnared in the military procurement scandal. At a 1979 CDL-sponsored rally at Arizona State University, Senator Dennis DeConcini, now one of the Keating Five, was the featured speaker. That same year Keating was accused by the SEC of authorizing a Cincinnati bank to make \$14 million in preferential and shaky loans to bank insiders, including Keating himself. He settled with the SEC

by signing a consent decree that neither admitted nor denied liability. Two years earlier, at a CDL "rally for decency," Keating had blasted "corporations that have no God but money," referring, presumably, only to pornographers.

By 1981 Keating was back in the direct-mail business. One letter, which ran on stationery with a logo showing a happy nuclear family being hugged by a vigilant-looking eagle, began: "If you absolutely do not care whether children are raped and sexually abused, then read no further." His note struck an urgent tone: "Child molesting is about to become AN ACCEPTED PART OF AMERICAN LIFE. If this is allowed to go any further, does anyone doubt that God will destroy us? If we do allow this

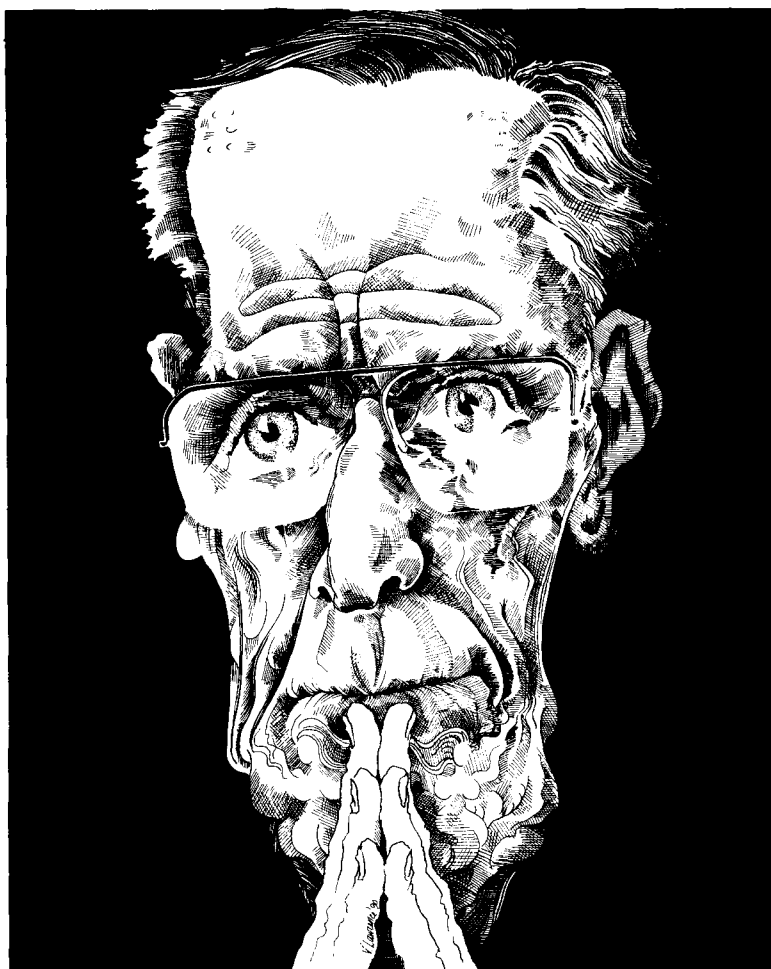
to go any further, does anyone doubt God *should* destroy us?" CDL targeted hotels, such as the Ramada Inn chain, that offered adult cable stations to their guests. It tried to fight dial-a-porn services. More members of Congress signed on, including liberal Representatives Geraldine Ferraro and Les AuCoin. In February 1984 federal banking regulators allowed Keating, despite his past problem with the SEC, to acquire Lincoln. He booted out the conservative lending officers and plunged the federally insured thrift into high-risk speculation in junk bonds, currency futures, stocks, hotels, land, and a casino.

The establishment of the Meese Commission on pornography in 1986 gave Keating hope. "This," he said, "is the start of the NEW SEXUAL REVOLUTION. . . . Our NEW SEXUAL REVOLUTION gives the beauty of sex back to husbands and wives as part of God's plan for the human race." In *The Los Angeles Times* Keating wrote of pornographers, "To bring America back to moral health, we need now to vomit these vermin and let them roll down the gutters to the sewers where they belong." Around this time Lincoln was selling \$200 million in bonds, mostly to the elderly, many of whom put their life savings into this paper, assuming the bonds were insured. They weren't. Now they are worthless.

Though the Meese Commission may have

provided Keating cause for optimism, he began to become less and less involved with the crusade for decency, his interest in doing God's work supplanted by more down-to-earth matters. In 1987 federal bank regulators began to investigate Lincoln. Keating complained bitterly. Edwin Gray, then chief of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, responded by maintaining that the founder of Citizens for Decency Through Law had tried to buy him off by offering him a very lucrative job.

But as problems with his S&L mounted, Keating continued to sign CDL fund-raising letters, which poured out at a furious pace: there were at least six direct-mail solicitations in the second half of 1987. One of those, sent out at Christmastime, asked recipients, "After 2000 years, what



CHARLES H. KEATING JR. BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

can you offer Him?" The answer was Swaggartesque and simple: "You can offer yourself as one standing firm against the forces of hell that have ranged themselves against the family . . . you can make a contribution to CDL."

Citizens for Decency Through Law is no more. In May 1989, weeks after Keating's main company went bankrupt, CDL reconstituted itself as the Children's Legal Foundation, which says it has no ties to the beleaguered Keating. The foundation has recently added sexually explicit rock 'n' roll lyrics and Satanism to its list of social cancers in need of excision. Those evils will have to be crushed without Keating, whose exploitation of banking law has removed him from the war against obscenity. If only he had devoted more time to his ineffectual campaign against sin and less to his fast-and-loose savings and loan, 23,000 bondholders and all American taxpayers would be better off today.

DAVID CORN is Washington editor of *The Nation*.

The once and future DLC.

WHAT'S THE BEEF?

By Robert Kuttner

Has the Democratic Leadership Council been overtaken by events? Or has it become the majority voice of the Democratic Party? Well, both.

This year's DLC national conference, to be held in New Orleans on March 22-25, comes on the heels of Lithuania's declaration of independence and free elections in East Germany. In its role as the caucus of Democratic hawks, the DLC in a post-cold war era looks increasingly anachronistic. At the same time its domestic program is looking increasingly progressive. If any recent political event certified the irrelevance of the original DLC mission to rid the party of liberal heresies, it was the victory last November of Douglas Wilder. A moderate black man and DLC member in good standing won the governorship of Virginia—but with substantial help from such DLC untouchables as organized labor and Ron Brown's Democratic National Committee. Wilder's secret weapon turned out to be a verboten "social issue"—choice on abortion. The old schisms seemed mercifully irrelevant. Yet despite the apparent convergence of party doctrine and strategy, the DLC keeps a lot of party infighting alive.

Rewind to 1985: Walter Mondale, a liberal, has lost forty-nine states and dragged a lot of local Democrats down with him. The sponsors of what would become the DLC blame the blowout on the demands of party

activists too liberal for the electorate. Mondale was not a bad fellow, but he got captured by the left. The party's indulgence of feminists, blacks, gays, environmental extremists, and organized labor, among others, was lethal for the white male middle-class vote, notably in the South. The remedy: the DLC, whose prime movers include Robert Strauss, who raises much of its early money, and former congressional staffer Alvin From. The DLC quickly emerges as the party's center-right caucus—a coalition of neoliberal intellectuals, Washington business reps who want to be Democratic players, and Southern party politicians tired of national liberals dragging down the ticket.

The DLC's strategy was to assemble Democratic elected officials whose own centrist views had passed muster with the voters, and to use them as a party-within-a-party to push for a more "mainstream" agenda. This included a harder line on defense (Sam Nunn); a middle-of-the-road fiscal program and a rapprochement with business (Chuck Robb); innovative variations on traditional Democratic issues like education (Bill Clinton); a sprinkling of blacks who didn't frighten whites (Bill Gray); and fresh-idea, ideologically moderate congressmen who did well in relatively conservative districts (Dick Gephardt). A number of relatively liberal Northern whites also joined up, because the DLC seemed to be one of the few lively places in the party. The DLC's magazine, *The Mainstream Democrat*, can be read as a triple entendre. To the voters: we Democrats are mainstream. To Democratic Party skeptics: we're not conservative, we're mainstream. And to liberals: We're mainstream, and you're not. The DLC leadership wanted to wrest the institutional Democratic Party leadership from the Ted Kennedy/AFL-CIO/feminist/minority rights axis. These "liberal fundamentalists," in political scientist William Galston's term, cared more about being politically correct than about winning elections.

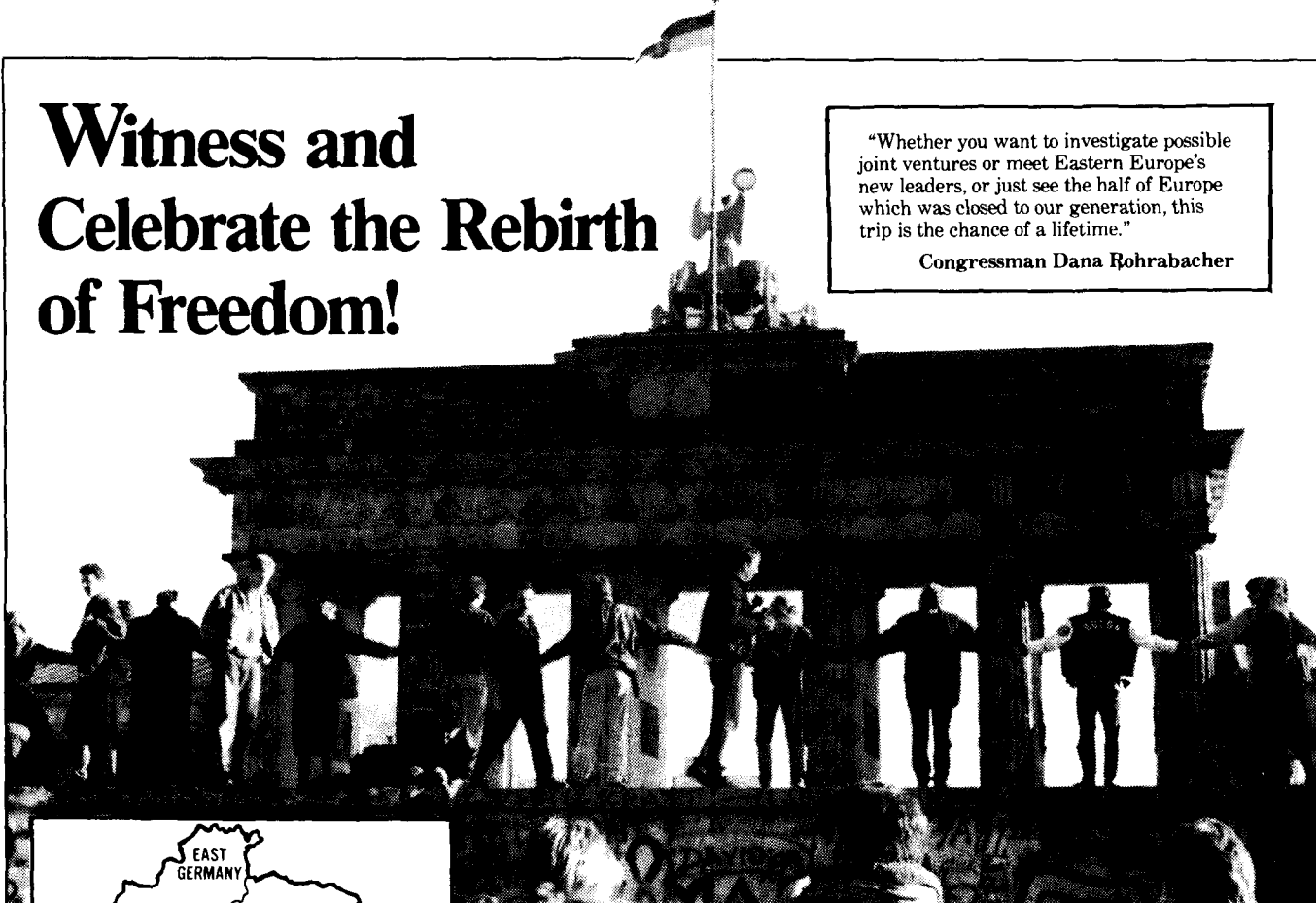
Fast-forward to 1987: Though one-time Ted Kennedy operative Paul Kirk is now party chairman (thanks to the usual liberal interest groups), the DLC has gotten Kirk to dump the party's special-interest caucus paraphernalia. The DLC also succeeds in counterreforming party delegate selection rules to give more power to elected officials, and in selling its scheme for a "Super Tuesday" Southern primary, where a moderate would presumably gain a big head start. And the DLC's policy proposal for National Service, tapping the JFK theme that citizens who get something from government should give something back, is getting a nice press.

Fast-forward to 1989. Uh-oh. Super Tuesday backfired. Mainly, it helped Jesse Jackson. Dukakis, the nominee by default, was another Mondale, only more wooden. The party is still in deep trouble in the macho South, even though Dukakis did his best to hide his liberalism. Now the cold war is over, and no Democrat, not even Nunn, wants a defense buildup. Worse, the national Democratic Party is in the hands of a man to the left of even Kirk—Ron Brown. Brown helped Kennedy mount his 1980 challenge to Jimmy Carter; he won the party chairmanship with the help of the AFL-CIO; and he was

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the 1988 convention chairman for Jackson.

But—funny thing—Brown really wants to win elections, too. He pours money and talent into congressional special elections, helping Democratic moderates as well as liberals. Most win. He's popular with state party chairmen and governors. November 1989 was a party triumph, with Wilder symbolizing the new convergence. Carl Wagner, Brown's chief political adviser, observes: "For the first time in my political life, there's a consensus on policy questions and on ideology. There's a consensus that the party must state a case for the nation. It supersedes all the narrow parochial fights that have divided the party for twenty years."

The DLC's own policy operation, the Progressive Policy Institute, would seem to confirm this. The institute's policy briefs are a creative amalgam of neoliberal and resolutely progressive ideas. For example, it has issued a paper attacking the minimum wage hike as inflationary, and championing instead the refundable tax credit for low-wage workers. Political connoisseurs read this as a poke in the eye to the DLC's old nemesis, organized labor. The plan would increase the credit by \$3.8 billion to guarantee all workers an income above the poverty line. Still, the PPI plan is anything but conservative. It amounts to a \$3.8 billion backdoor anti-poverty entitlement to all wage workers.

Other PPI proposals emphasize the themes of boosting savings, investment, and productivity, rather than what PPI director Will Marshall calls "welfare state liberalism." One paper proposes an "Individual Development Account"—a variation on a tax-sheltered IRA—for homeownership, lifetime education and training, or retirement. Another soon-to-be released proposal suggests adapting the West German system of comprehensive apprenticeship. Yet another touts a "police corps." "We're trying to fashion approaches that work as economics and correspond as politics to the basic values of the public," says the institute's chief economist, Rob Shapiro, a former Moynihan staffer. (Truth-in-packaging disclosure: I helped found the Economic Policy Institute, another progressive think tank.)

The institute's is hardly a center-right program. More than anything else it is reminiscent of Gary Hart's 1984 attempt to fashion a programmatic vision that emphasized growth and productivity rather than redistribution per se, but without sacrificing distributional justice: a good, traditional Democratic program for the middle and working classes, brought up to date, celebrating work and mutual obligation. This happens to be where most of the party is.

Curiously, though, the DLC and the PPI are still waging yesterday's factional wars. The institute's longest treatise, *The Politics of Evasion*, published in 1989, is the latest iteration of Galston's treatise on liberal fundamentalism. Co-authored by Elaine Kamarck, it presents a familiar story: "Liberal fundamentalists argue that the party's presidential problems stem from insufficiently liberal candidates who have failed to rally the party's faithful . . . [but] the real problem is not insufficient

liberalism on the part of Democratic nominees; it is rather the fact that in the past two decades, most Democratic nominees have come to be seen as *unacceptably* liberal. . . ." The paper goes on to criticize "reluctance to criticize established orthodoxies" (including the pro-choice position), and ends with a plea to recognize mainstream middle-class values of "individual responsibility, hard work, equal opportunity," rather than racial compensation, and the fact that "the purpose of criminal punishment is to punish."

The liberal fundamentalist villains are, of course, labor, affirmative action constituencies, women's groups, and Brown's Democratic National Committee. Yet this seems oddly anachronistic. The party's moderate governors and senators get along just fine with Brown's operation and are happy to count on AFL-CIO manpower and money to get elected. Stripped of its attack on liberals, the Galston-Kamarck prescription is almost perfectly in sync with the strategic thinking of, say, Stanley Greenberg, the pollster/strategist whose clients include left-liberal candidates as well as major trade unions and the national Democratic Party. The DLC staff works to marginalize big labor, yet Gephardt, a DLC letterhead stalwart, is a labor favorite. The DLC is wary of Brown, yet several of its key moderate elected leaders, including Clinton and Bruce Babbitt, helped put Brown in office.

If the party's old doctrinal schisms are largely healed, why does the DLC keep the factional infighting alive? Three reasons. Marshall, the head of the policy institute, says old-style liberals ("the entitlement left") and their allies in Congress are barriers to genuinely fresh thinking. "Our proposals have been ignored. If you don't represent a traditional interest group with a pipeline to a committee chairman, you can't get a hearing." (On the other hand, some of the institute's own proposals are simply innovative new entitlements.) The second reason is more visceral. When Tip O'Neill declared that "All politics is local," he meant that all politics is personal. An annotated version of the Galston-Kamarck paper would reference bitter schisms of decades past. The party's older neo-conservatives can't forgive anti-war liberals for costing Hubert Humphrey the 1968 election, or McGovernites for alienating the regulars in 1972. Carter loyalists (like Kamarck) blame Kennedy partisans for mounting a 1980 primary challenge. Relatively conservative veterans of the 1984 Mondale campaign feel he was captured by the party's liberal and labor activists. As for the third reason, if you ask DLC people just who these nameless "liberal fundamentalists" are, they will take digs at the AFL-CIO and the DNC, but the supreme villain is, not surprisingly, Jesse Jackson.

The newest DLC loyalty test is, who is willing to be toughest on Jackson. At the DLC's 1989 conference in Philadelphia, Ben Wattenberg publicly proposed kicking Jackson out of the party. Much of the arcane infighting over party rules can be understood as minimizing Jackson's influence for 1992. But no party-

elected official attacks Jackson publicly: not Kennedy, not Robb. At the Philadelphia meeting, where Jackson was a guest speaker, Robb fawned all over him. As long as Jackson continues to enjoy broad legitimacy as a leader in the black community, he will be a headache for the entire party mainstream, left, right, and center. Yet Jackson serves as a handy proxy for keeping old grudges alive.

It's time for a genuine truce. Republicans learned to stop beating up on each other a long time ago. The DLC attacks liberals for fundamentalist litmus tests. But the liberals are in a newly pragmatic mood, and the DLC crowd are the ones using party rules, minimum wage, Jackson-bashing, and memories of ancient faction fights as litmuses.

There is, however, one hopeful omen. With Nunn and Gephardt off on other projects, the DLC is looking for fresh leadership. The word is that the DLC old boys are pressing Clinton to be its next chairman. That's a splendid idea. Despite his eye-glazing national debut at the 1988 Democratic convention, Clinton is a superb governor and a genuine progressive who has built racial amity in Arkansas by addressing bread-and-butter concerns that transcend race, such as public education. Clinton also gets along well with the Darth Vaders of the DLC script—the liberal fundamentalists. Intentionally or not, the DLC may finally bury the hatchet and get on with rebuilding the party. •

The anatomy of an analogy.

REVOLUTION REDUX

By Owen Harries

In the restless search for analogies that will cast light on the remarkable year 1989, many have settled on 1848. It is a better choice than most.

Both years witnessed popular risings “from below,” inspired by a mixture of liberal and national sentiments, in several European countries. In each case there was a contagion effect. These risings came after long periods of comparative stability, and cumulatively they challenged not only individual governments but an existing European order. “The greater revolution of 1848,” says A. J. P. Taylor, “was against international stability, against the system of the Congress of Vienna.” Similarly, and obviously, the events of the autumn of 1989 threaten the unusually stable post-World War II “order” in Europe.

The initial success of both revolutionary movements was facilitated by a sudden loss of will on the part of existing rulers. What was said of the Orleans Monarchy

in France—that it was not overthrown but simply collapsed—can be said of Erich Honecker's East German regime and Gustav Husak's Czechoslovakia. But it goes beyond a loss of will. In both cases the revolutionary movements actually received support—active or tacit—from key figures in the old order. In 1848 it came from the recently installed Pope Pius IX, who initially sympathized with the aspirations of the liberals in Italy; in 1989 from Mikhail Gorbachev, whose acquiescence was a necessary condition for the liberalization of Central Europe.

Reflecting on the events of 1848 in Italy, the great Hapsburg statesman Prince Metternich ruefully observed, “I had calculated on everything but a liberal pope.” Today, along with virtually all Western governments and observers, the deposed Communist rulers could say that they had calculated on everything but a general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union who was prepared to give up control of the Soviet bloc.

In each case the revolutionary challenge was mounted principally against a ramshackle multinational state that had been the main upholder of the old system. Under Metternich's leadership, the Hapsburg empire had led the effort to reimpose the old dynastic order in Europe after 1815 and to hold the forces of nationalism and liberalism at bay. The Soviet Union stamped its own order on half of Europe after 1945 and then worked to frustrate the same forces. Both saw themselves as the upholders of an ideological principle. For both, the cost involved in these self-imposed tasks severely distorted and strained the regimes and substantially contributed to making effective government impossible. The historian E. L. Woodward maintained that the gravest charge against Metternich is that his foreign policy went beyond the means at the disposal of his country. Metternich himself in old age recognized the cost of his foreign policy: “I ruled Europe sometimes, but I never governed Austria.” The applicability of both statements to the rulers of the Soviet Union is obvious.

It was in 1848 that the question of German unity, and its consequences, was first placed firmly on the European agenda, under the slogan *Einheit, Freiheit, Und Macht* (“Unity, Freedom, and Power”). As a result of the events of 1989 it has resumed its place as a central issue on that agenda. In both cases the question of how the three elements in the slogan should be understood and related to each other, and the problem of how to reconcile the different political traditions of West and East Germany (Prussia in 1848), loomed large.

Does the analogy extend further than this? One must hope not. Although the long-term changes precipitated by the revolutions of 1848 were profound, immediate gains were nearly all lost very quickly. (The British historian Sir Lewis Namier concluded an essay on 1848 with the bleak observation that “most of the men of 1848 lacked political experience, and before a year was out the ‘trees of liberty’ planted by them had withered away.”) When the effects of revolution came nearer to home, Pius quickly

withdrew his support from the liberal cause and progressively became more reactionary. Some predict that before the current drama has played itself out, Gorbachev too will have second thoughts, and that Mikhail the Reformer will be succeeded by Mikhail the Hammer.

To a very large extent, the defeat of the revolutions of 1848 was due to the intervention of foreign powers, motivated largely by fear that the popular uprisings would destabilize Europe. The first significant foreign policy act of Louis Napoleon as president of the new French republic was to send an army to restore papal authority in Rome, after Pius had been forced to flee the city.

More interesting in terms of the current situation was Russia's reaction. Traditionally, the Hapsburg and Romanov empires were deadly rivals. But when the revolution spread to the Hapsburgs' Hungarian possessions, Czar Nicholas I offered Vienna unconditional military support to suppress it; and he delivered. Russian forces entered Hungary in May 1849 and by August they had crushed the revolution there. According to Taylor, "The prime motive of this offer was undoubtedly conservative solidarity," together with the fear of the spreading instability. (Poland was a particular source of concern in St. Petersburg.) These considerations overrode traditional rivalries and any Russian temptation to exploit the Hapsburgs' desperate situation.

Are we seeing something similar evolving now, with the Soviet Union this time cast in the role of the beleaguered great power and the United States as its unexpected savior? The Soviet Union and its empire are in a state of crisis. The reaction of many in the West—and they seem to be finding a receptive audience in the Bush administration—is that we must render Gorbachev what assistance we can, in order to avert the chaos that could result from the disintegration of our erstwhile rival. "The enemy," declared President Bush, "is unpredictability. The enemy is instability."

In this instance, of course, it is not military intervention but economic assistance, along with political understanding, that people have in mind. Confronted with the possibility of turmoil and anarchy, we must be concerned about containing confusion, not Soviet power; support for the forces of change (even those that embody our values) must be measured against the advantage of order. In the strange circumstances of 1990, this way of thinking appeals both to those liberals entranced by Gorbachev and to harder practitioners of realpolitik.

Well, it cannot be denied that the potential for chaos and violence in Central Europe and the Soviet Union is not merely theoretical and distant, but real and immediate. The aspiration for democracy swells from Berlin to Moscow and from Tallinn to Sofia, and there are many people of exceptional courage and dedication to liberty. But there is not a single political figure or party in sight with *any* experience in the politics of a democratic state. The economic prognosis for all of these countries ranges from dismal to disastrous, and any realistic attempt to make things better must start with measures

whose immediate effect would be to make things even worse. And there now looms the distinct possibility of a revival of the bitter and bloody national and ethnic strife that has marked the region in the past.

In the center of the picture is "the Sick Bear": a great power faced with the likely prospect of internal disintegration and the certainty of declining international status, but still in possession of enormous military strength. It is precisely in these circumstances that states tend to lose their judgment and engage in reckless risks.

Given the centrality of the region (it is, after all, the heart of the geopolitical "heartland," where both global wars of this century began), if things do go bad the results will not easily be contained and localized. It is this possibility that makes the case for Western, and specifically American, aid to Gorbachev and the newly emerging governments of Central Europe. But though it is a strong case, there are also formidable difficulties in implementing such a policy. How to make the aid effective? How to ensure that it will not simply act as a substitute for reform? How to assist the countries of Central Europe in a way that will assuage rather than aggravate the Soviet Union's security anxieties?

Even if these and similar questions can be answered satisfactorily, there is still the basic issue to be confronted. If stability and order are important foreign policy values, so for the United States are self-determination and freedom; and the task of balancing the claims of one set of values against those of the other is extraordinarily difficult. Contrast, for example, recent statements by two prominent Washington figures. Paul Nitze, a card-carrying realist, says unequivocally, "If it comes to a necessary choice, we in the United States should not acquiesce in the reimplementing of 'Communist discipline.' If Gorbachev turns in that direction, our policy should be one of unambiguous opposition" (*The Washington Post*, January 10). On the other hand, John D. Steinbruner, the director of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution, maintains that the importance to Washington of Gorbachev's remaining in power far outweighs the issue of independence for the Baltic states. Steinbruner links Gorbachev's continued presence to the negotiating of a new world security order (*The New York Times*, January 13).

Differences on this issue are likely to cut across conventional left-right divisions. While the left is often rhetorically disdainful of "order" as a conservative preoccupation, fear of a nuclear war makes it respectful of order in practice, and anything that threatens to destroy it is depicted as "confrontationalist" or "provocative." A mirror image of these conflicting concerns exists on the right. Conservatives place a high value on order but are deeply hostile to the idea of acquiescing to the kind of Communist repression that might be used to curb spreading instability. Should such repression occur, it might well cause a sharp split between the realist and ideological components of the right. The resulting debate would be much more pas-

News

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sionate and bitter than the one following the Tiananmen Square massacre last year.

In any case, if the United States were to adopt a policy of supporting the man frequently described as "the best general secretary of the CPSU we are ever likely to get," it should do so without expecting anything in exchange. Again the events of 1848 and its aftermath are relevant. After the decisive Russian intervention in Hungary, Hapsburg Prime Minister Felix Schwarzenberg calmly

observed, "We shall astonish the world with our ingratitude." He was as good as his word. When, a few years later, the Crimean War began and an isolated Russia was confronted by Britain and France, the Hapsburgs remained neutral. As good a reminder as any that, between rivals in international politics, one good turn usually deserves very little.

OWEN HARRIES is editor of *The National Interest*.

How to lie with drug statistics.

YOUR ANALYSIS IS FAULTY

By John Horgan

In the war on drugs J. Michael Walsh is one of the administration's most valuable officers. His mission is to implement—and, more important, to justify—programs in which the urine of working people is searched for signs of illegal drugs. Walsh designed the drug-testing program for federal employees mandated by Ronald Reagan several years ago and is now advising business leaders on how to test their workers. He has argued in favor of testing before Congress and federal judges, on national radio and TV shows, and in countless other public forums.

Walsh's basic message is this: drug users, from crack addicts to weekend marijuana smokers, make less productive workers than non-users. So employers are justified in using drug tests—which cannot distinguish between chronic abuse on the job and occasional use at home—to root out all users from the work force.

Other officials say the same thing, but Walsh's title gives his words extra weight. He is director of the Division of Applied Research and the Office of Workplace Initiatives at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the chief federal drug research agency. The evidence he marshals is passed on to drug czar William Bennett and is widely disseminated, with the federal government's seal of approval. This role, and Walsh's status as a scientist, oblige him to uphold high standards of objectivity and competence. More than any other person, he is responsible for the intellectual honesty of the whole Reagan-Bush drive for workplace testing. A look at some of the central claims he has made in support of that drive reveals that he has not met his responsibility.

Two years ago Walsh testified in federal court that the "cost of drug abuse to U.S. industry" was nearly

.....
JOHN HORGAN writes for *Scientific American*.

\$50 billion a year, according to "conservative estimates." This claim is a staple of anti-drug rhetoric. It is frequently quoted without qualification by the media, and last year President Bush rounded it upward to "anywhere from \$60 billion to \$100 billion."

Here's how the figure was derived. In 1982 NIDA surveyed 3,700 households around the country. The Research Triangle Institute (RTI), a NIDA contractor in North Carolina, then analyzed the data and found that the household income of adults who had *ever* smoked marijuana daily for a month (or at least twenty out of thirty days) was twenty-eight percent less than the income of those who hadn't. The RTI analysts called this difference "reduced productivity due to daily marijuana use." They calculated the total "loss," when extrapolated to the general population, at \$26 billion. Adding the estimated costs of drug-related crimes, accidents, and medical care produced a grand total of \$47 billion for "costs to society of drug abuse."

Several things are wrong here, but the most glaring is the simpleminded conclusion that marijuana smoking *caused* the lower incomes with which it was associated. There are many respects in which the behavior of lower-income people differs statistically from that of upper-income people, but this mere correlation never establishes causality. It is quite probable, for example, that people who would admit to watching "Wheel of Fortune" every night have lower incomes than those who do not. Should we then conclude that television game shows decrease productivity? Or, by similar logic, should we conclude that Thunderbird wine hurts productivity but Chivas Regal scotch helps it?

You may be wondering why the RTI study used the awkward variable of "marijuana-use-daily-for-a-month-ever" as an indicator of drug abuse. Good question. Ac-

tually, the RTI researchers had information on *current* use (at least once in the last thirty days) of drugs—including cocaine, heroin, amphetamines, and LSD as well as marijuana—but they could find no connection to decreased income. If Walsh really accepts the logic linking a single month-long marijuana binge to decreased productivity, he must also conclude that *current* use does *not* decrease productivity. But he shows no signs of doing so.

Walsh now admits that the RTI study “is based on assumptions that need additional validation.” One wonders why he hasn’t passed that information on to Bush, Bennett, representatives of the drug-testing industry, and others who continue to treat the “cost of drug abuse to industry” as a scientifically established fact.

Anyway, Walsh says he has other evidence demonstrating the urgent need for workplace testing. He and another NIDA official edited and published a 340-page collection of studies called *Drugs in the Workplace*. When I interviewed Walsh recently, he drew my attention to three studies in particular—one done by the Navy and two by electric-power utilities—that he said showed that drug users make poor employees.

Let’s start with the Navy study. The primary subjects were 500 recruits who tested positive for marijuana in 1985 and were admitted anyway (those who tested positive for any other illegal drug were rejected). Two-and-a-half years later the Navy had discharged forty-three percent of those who had tested positive and only nineteen percent of those who had tested negative during the same recruitment period. Sounds like former pot-heads make lousy soldiers, right? Walsh even suggested to me that the lingering effects of pre-service marijuana use may have been responsible. “We do know that it stays in the system for a long time,” he noted.

But hold on. Look at the difference between the positives and the negatives. The positives were about twice as likely to be black and to lack a high school diploma. Why not blame poor education or cultural factors correlated with race for their high discharge rate? (In fact, civil rights groups have complained that the Navy uses testing to keep blacks out of the service.)

Actually, there is an even simpler explanation. One of the conditions for being admitted to the Navy after testing positive for marijuana was agreeing to submit to rigorous “surveillance” thereafter, including unusually frequent drug tests (all naval personnel undergo three such tests a year). A third of the positives were discharged because they failed another drug test.

There are two problems here. One is that these sailors had no documented loss of productivity and exhibited no misbehavior except for drug use. So the natural conclusion isn’t that people who have used drugs are more likely to be deficient workers (the only conclusion that would justify workplace testing), but rather that people who have used drugs are more likely than others to use drugs in the future. But even this conclusion is undermined by the second problem with the study: these sailors, facing more frequent testing than sailors in the control group,

stood a better chance of getting *caught* using drugs.

If one discounts the sailors discharged for failing subsequent drug tests, the difference in the discharge rates between the positives and the negatives shrinks from twenty-four to ten percent. Other forms of extra surveillance could easily account for that difference. Obviously, the more closely you watch someone, the more likely you are to see him misbehaving, especially if you think he is a troublemaker to begin with.

Another study cited by Walsh, conducted by the Utah Power and Light Company, makes the Navy experiment look like a paragon of scientific rigor. The Utah study compared the work history of employees who tested positive for drugs with a control group of employees whose ages and jobs were similar. The data showed a “significant difference between drug users and non-users in terms of being involved in accidents, being absent from work, and overutilization of health benefits,” Walsh told me.

When one reads the study two flaws quickly stand out: there were only twelve positives in all (eleven for marijuana and one for cocaine), an absurdly small sample, and the control group *was never tested for drugs*. The study’s conclusion could be rejected on these grounds alone.

But there is an even bigger problem. Eight of the twelve “drug abusers” (to use the Utah researchers’ term) were tested *because* they were in accidents, and some were injured and needed time off to recuperate. Of the four remaining positives, two were tested for other performance-related problems and two because they had enrolled in a substance-abuse program. High absenteeism almost invariably precedes—and precipitates—both performance-related testing and submission to a substance-abuse program. Moreover, all employees who undergo a test are suspended until the results come back, which usually takes three or four days.

Incredibly, the Utah researchers included in their calculations the accidents and absenteeism directly associated with the testing of the twelve subjects. By this logic, you could link *any* trait to accidents and absenteeism. Round up employees who have been in an accident or have been absent a lot, test them for, say, type O blood, and send them home for a few more days of absenteeism. Then compare the accident and absenteeism rates within the type O group with those for a “control” group with no particular history of accidents or absenteeism—and whose blood type, in keeping with the Utah methodology, wouldn’t even be tested; it would just be assumed not to be type O. Surprise, surprise: type Os had more accidents and missed work more often than people whose blood wasn’t tested. Better get rid of everyone with type O blood.

And what about the “overutilization of health benefits” that Walsh had mentioned? He apparently mispoke. In the introduction to the NIDA monograph he calls the health benefits data “inconclusive.” In fact, the positives consumed almost fifty percent *less* in health benefits than the control group. If the positives had used fifty percent more, would

Walsh have found that “inconclusive”?

The other utility study cited by Walsh, which was done at the Georgia Power Company, also focused on employees tested “for cause.” But the Georgia researchers used a different control group: the 116 people who came up positive were compared with 713 who passed the test. This comparison, ostensibly fairer than that in the Utah study, found that the positives missed about five more days of work per year than the negatives.

But even the methodology that yielded this modest finding is flawed. The authors of the study note, with refreshing candor, that “the primary subject for the database is the problem employee.” Indeed, the negatives and positives all missed work much more often than the company average. It’s kind of like testing burglars for marijuana and concluding that—because those who tested positive had robbed a few more houses than those who did not—marijuana makes ordinary people more likely to steal.

Moreover, couldn’t alcohol, which is often consumed in conjunction with illegal drugs, contribute to the higher absenteeism of the positives? None of the employees was tested for alcohol. Of course, tests wouldn’t prove much anyway, since alcohol is detectable in body fluids for only six hours or so, whereas cocaine persists for two or three days and marijuana for up to a month. That may be one reason that this and some other studies fail to consider the possibility that alcohol abuse is sometimes responsible for misbehavior attributed to illegal drugs.

When I asked Walsh about the flaws in these studies, he replied: “You could make the same argument about any database in higher research, such as cancer research, or mental health research.” This is an insult to every scientist in those fields. None of the studies that Walsh touts has passed peer review (or is likely to), whereas thousands of papers on cancer and mental health have passed this minimal standard.

Walsh sometimes sounds quite reasonable and “scientific,” especially when he talks about the mechanics of testing. He emphasizes that when a drug test comes up positive it should be confirmed by a more sophisticated analysis (a good idea, since poppy seeds, ibuprofen, and cold pills can trigger false alarms for heroin, marijuana, and amphetamines, respectively). He also stresses the importance of maintaining high laboratory standards and confidentiality.

But whenever he ventures beyond the mechanics of testing and tries to justify the enterprise itself, he shows an odd disregard for facts. For example, he frequently suggests that drug abuse is rampant not just in specific sectors of society, but broadly and pervasively. “The problem of drug abuse is so widespread in America,” he declared in a speech last year, “that every company must assume that its employees will eventually be faced with a substance abuse problem—of their own, of a family member, of a co-worker, or of a friend.” He always neglects to mention that NIDA’s own statistics show that the use of illegal drugs—marijuana, cocaine,

PCP, the whole lot—has been declining sharply for years. Severe cocaine addiction (daily use) has increased, but primarily among the unemployed, who are beyond the reach of workplace testing.

I asked Walsh whether he thought that, given these data, his efforts to promote workplace testing might be misplaced. “I think drug abuse has gone down because of these workplace programs,” he replied. I pointed out—again according to NIDA’s data—that the decline began in 1979, well before testing had caught on. Then Walsh asserted that, whether or not drug use has declined among workers and whether or not severe addiction occurs largely among the unemployed, there are still an estimated 10 million working people who are using illicit drugs, and they represent a “much bigger problem than the few hard core.” “The concept is to eliminate illegal drug use,” he said, “not just to focus on those who are addicted.”

This sentiment, of course, lies at the core of all of Walsh’s uninformed claims. He adheres to the zero-tolerance line, which doesn’t discriminate between use and abuse, between a secretary smoking marijuana on weekends and an AIDS-ridden prostitute smoking \$100 worth of crack a day. From this perspective, drug testing—which also fails to discriminate between casual and chronic user—makes sense.

But then, Walsh does believe that even occasional marijuana use can have devastating effects. “I think we have reached the point where the involvement of marijuana in accidents exceeds that of alcohol,” he said. Where is his proof for this dramatic statement? He doesn’t have any, but “it’s one of the things in my research program we’re trying to do right now.” Note the procedure: Walsh reaches his conclusion first, then sets out to prove it.

As a scientist, Walsh is probably in over his head. He has testified to having “over twenty years of experience (fifteen years in the laboratory) in research on the physiological and behavioral effects of psychoactive drugs.” Well, sort of. Before joining NIDA in 1980, Walsh spent fourteen years at the Naval Medical Research Institute studying what might be called underwater altered states. For his Ph.D., which he received from American University in 1973, he studied nitrogen narcosis (“rapture of the deep”). Typical of his pre-NIDA publications is a paper about what happens to mice when they are given morphine under “hyperbaric [abnormally high] pressure” and an article called “Should Divers Take Drugs?” published in something called *Faceplate*.

On the other hand, if you view Walsh not as a scientist but as a propagandist, you have to admit he has done his job well. A decade ago virtually no companies had testing programs. Now a majority—including such bastions of liberalism as *The New York Times*—test employees, job applicants, or both. Walsh can’t take all the credit, but he certainly has done his part. Perhaps that is why he remains so strangely sanguine when confronted with all the inconsistencies in his logic. He has already won the day. “Drug testing,” he says with pride, “is here to stay.” •

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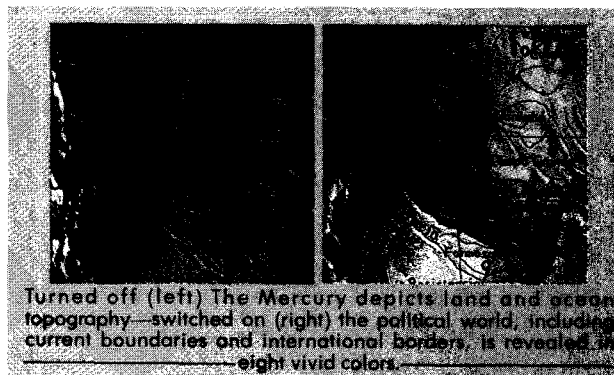
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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Human Natures

Good luck to Harry Hook and Martin Fuhrer. Hook directed and edited the new version of **Lord of the Flies** (Columbia), Fuhrer photographed it, and both did superior work. They deserve better scripts in the future.

When William Golding, author of the immensely successful novel, was given the Nobel Prize in 1983, a murmur of amused surprise seemed to run through the literary world. This was not the most dubious award in Nobel history—remember Pearl S. Buck? John Steinbeck?—but it certainly seemed out of order. To read through this first novel of Golding's again is to be further bemused by his laurels.

Lord of the Flies isn't a novel, it's a mechanism, made as if to demonstrate elements in human nature to a high school psychology class. A group of about sixteen boys, British in the original but here become American, are stranded on a tropical island when their plane goes down; and before they are rescued, which takes some time, their behavior discloses the palette of colors in human character from nobility to murder.

When J. M. Barrie wrote a play about a desert island as social catalyst, *The Admirable Crichton*, he took the curse off the device by providing a beginning and end back in Britain. But Golding's book is a bare and thin setup, and what it says about the desperately wicked human heart is at about the Kurt Vonnegut level.

So, as soon as the shape of the thing is clear, we sit back resignedly to watch the pat allegory being played out. Sara Schiff's screenplay has a few inexplicable

moments and it never gives the reason for the title, but it presents the story adequately enough. The boy actors are all at about the same level—passable—and in time the film finishes.

But Hook has directed with snap and visual keenness, much more competently than Peter Brook in his 1963 version. The very first shot is of sheer blue: it might be the sky. Then a man's body descends slowly past us, and we see that we are in ocean depths. Hook does his best throughout to keep our eyes alert and he edits to suit, but he's flogging a terminally ill horse. Fuhrer's camera makes the most of the tropical colors—it was shot in Jamaica. Philippe Sarde's score, however, is mostly mickey-mousing: the rhythms in the music frequently mimic the rhythms on screen.

Marianne Sägebrecht is fat. There's no point in putting it any other way or in avoiding the subject, because her size is

the only reason she is on screen. She can't act. But then she isn't really asked to; she is merely asked to show us what a fat woman looks like when she goes through a light comic role that makes no reference at all to her size.

Rosalie Goes Shopping (Four Seasons) is the third film that Sägebrecht, a German, has made for the German director Percy Adlon. The first, *Sugarbaby*, was set in Germany; then came *Bagdad Café*, set in a Western motel. The latest is set in the unsexed town of Stuttgart, Arkansas. The profound comment begins with the choice of the town, as it did with Wim Wenders's choice of Paris, Texas. Adlon, like Wenders, seems both intoxicated and repelled in the presence of American pop culture and folkways, and his use of Sägebrecht is a ponderous signal that he means to treat matters in comic-strip style.

All the actors in *Rosalie* are dreadful. The two who might have been better, Brad Davis and Judge Reinhold, reveal by their performances that Adlon has asked for broadness. We can almost see light bulbs above the actors' heads when they get ideas.

What plot there is doesn't matter. The basic idea is that Rosalie, married to a slow-witted crop-duster pilot, has learned how to run up bills and pile bad credit on bad credit. At the end she is comfortably ensconced on top of a cushion of debts. I suppose it's all meant to show something fallacious in the American way of life, especially since Rosalie's parents visit from Germany and are wonderstruck by the goings-on.

If all this were amusing, even partly so, the picture would not be offensive. The offense is not in lampooning American customs but in leaning so heavily on audience cooperation, in Adlon's apparent assumption that we will join in the satire just because he attempts it and is proving his comic bona fides by using this spherical actress.

Adlon's first film to be shown here was *Céleste*, a lovely picture of Proust's faithful servant and the relation be-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Cinema Paradiso. A screen-struck Sicilian boy becomes a screen-struck man in a small town whose warm life centers on the local film theater. Pleasantly sentimental. (Reviewed 2/19/90) **Glory.** Powerful. A chronicle of a black Union regiment in the Civil War, done—except for the anachronistic performance of the young colonel by Matthew Broderick—very movingly. (1/8&15/90) **Lonely Woman Seeks Life Companion.** The Soviet Union sends a small-scale, acutely detailed comedy-drama about a lonely woman in her forties and an intelligent drifter. Delicate directing and acting. (3/19/90) **Mama, There's a Man in Your Bed.** From France, of course. Bright and winning confection about a Parisian CEO and the black woman who cleans his office. Made to please, it succeeds. (3/5/90) —SK

tween her and her ailing master. If Adlon had made just one Sägebrecht cartoon after that, good or otherwise, the change might have been diverting. But a Sägebrecht career! . . .

Michael Caine, Inc. flourishes apace. A new Caine film seems always to be coming into view, and the remarkable fact about his prodigality is that, in a more important sense, he never stops working. He never loafes through anything. Thus, by sheer talent and honesty, he gives some weight to the film he's in even if it's not particularly weighty.

The new Caine film that keeps coming along is, like as not, a thriller of some sort. This time it's **A Shock to the System** (Corsair), adapted by Andrew Klavan from a novel by Simon Brett, and like many thrillers, it's built on classic themes: ambition and murder. The arena is the now-familiar one of Big Bucks. Caine plays a midlevel executive in a huge New York firm of some kind. (No American accent: he's English-born.) His wife is a spendthrift drag, but he hopes to lessen this worry with a promotion that looms and that will bring more money.

He doesn't get the promotion. But he discovers that he can kill. On a subway platform, a beggar pesters him; Caine pushes him, the man falls onto the tracks, and a train does the rest. Caine gets away with it completely. He proceeds to think about his wife and his chief rival in the company. Then he makes plans.

The plot has a couple of holes in it, but Caine breezes along as if it didn't. The most notable fact about the picture is that the protagonist is an egocentric murderer (perhaps the adjective is superfluous), with no jot of sympathy in him; yet a considerable star accepted the role. That in itself is a small socio-cultural marker. What's even more remarkable is that Caine, by his very believability—not by tugging at our hearts—is able to make us hope that he succeeds with his wickedness.

Swoosie Kurtz, as Caine's wife, is a nag without caricature. Elizabeth McGovern, a junior executive in Caine's office, as usual tries hard to be interesting. John McMartin gives a quiet, true performance as a top man tossed ruthlessly on the scrap heap by management.

The director, Jan Egleson, has done TV and theater work, has acted and written. He knows how to tell his story clearly, without strain. A nod to another new and gifted cinematographer, Paul Goldsmith, who trained with Haskell Wexler. Goldsmith's work is especially good in the office sequences, which seem less photographed than incised. •



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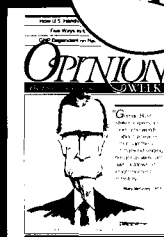
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The undainty feminism of Roseanne Barr.

The Wretched of the Hearth

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH

In the second half of the eighties, when American conservatism had reached its masochistic zenith with the re-election of Ronald Reagan, when women's liberation had been replaced by the more delicate sensibility known as post-feminism, when everyone was a yuppie and the heartiest word of endorsement in our vocabulary was "appropriate," there was yet this one paradox: our favorite TV personages were a liberal black man and a left-wing white feminist. Cosby could be explained as a representative of America's officially pro-family mood, but Roseanne is a trickier case. Her idea of humor is to look down on her sleeping family in the eponymous sitcom and muse, "Mmmm, I wonder where we could find an all-night taxidermist."

If zeitgeist were destiny, Roseanne would never have happened. Only a few years ago, we learn from her autobiography, Roseanne Barr was just your run-of-the-mill radical feminist mother-of-three, writing poems involving the Great Goddess, denouncing all known feminist leaders as sellout trash, and praying for the sixties to be born again in a female body. Since the entertainment media do not normally cast about for fat, loud-mouthed feminists to promote to superstardom, we must assume that Roseanne has something to say that many millions of people have been waiting to hear. Like this, upon being told of a woman who stabbed her husband thirty-seven times: "I admire her restraint."

Roseanne is the neglected underside of the eighties, bringing together its great themes of poverty, obesity, and defiance. The overside is handled well enough by Candice Bergen ("Murphy Brown") and Madonna, who exist to remind us that talented women who work out are bound to become fabulously successful. Roseanne works a whole different beat, both in her sitcom and in the movie *She-Devil*, portraying the hopeless underclass of the female sex: polyester-clad, overweight occupants of the slow track; fast-food waitresses, factory work-

BARBARA EHRENREICH is the author most recently of *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (Pantheon).

ers, housewives, members of the invisible pink-collar army; the despised, the jilted, the underpaid.

But Barr—and this may be her most appealing feature—is never a victim. In the sitcom, she is an overworked mother who is tormented by her bosses at such locales as Wellman Plastics (where she works the assembly line) and Chicken Divine (a fast-food spot). But Roseanne Connor, her sitcom character, has, as we say in the blue-collar suburbs, a mouth on her. When the cute but obnoxious boss at Wellman calls the workers together and announces, "I have something to tell you," Roseanne yells out, "What? That you feel you're a woman trapped in a man's body?" In *She-Devil*, where Barr is unfortunately shorn of her trademark deadpan snarl, revenge must take more concrete forms: she organizes an army of the wretched of the earth—

Roseanne: My Life As a Woman
by Roseanne Barr
(Harper & Row, 202 pp., \$18.95)

nursing home patients and clerical workers—to destroy her errant husband and drive the slender, beautiful, rich-and-famous Other Woman dotty.

At some point, the women's studies profession is bound to look up from its deconstructions and "re-thinkings" and notice Roseanne. They will then observe, in article and lecture form, that Barr's radicalism is distributed over the two axes of gender and class. This is probably as good an approach as any. Barr's identity is first of all female—her autobiography is titled *My Life As a Woman*—but her female struggles are located in the least telegenic and most frequently overlooked of social strata—the white, blue-collar working class. In anticipation of Roseannology, let us begin with Barr's contribution to the sociology of social class, and then take up her impressive achievements in the area of what could be called feminist theory.

"Roseanne" the sitcom, which was inspired by Barr the stand-up comic, is a radical departure simply for featuring blue-collar Americans—and for depicting them as something other than half-witted greasers and low-life louts. The

working class does not usually get much of a role in the American entertainment spectacle. In the seventies mumbly, muscular blue-collar males (*Rocky*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Saturday Night Fever*) enjoyed a brief modishness on the screen, while Archie Bunker, the consummate blue-collar bigot, raved away on the tube. But even these grossly stereotyped images vanished in the eighties, as the spectacle narrowed in on the brie-and-chardonnay class. Other than "Roseanne," I can find only one sitcom that deals consistently with the sub-yuppie condition: "Married ... with children," a relentlessly nasty portrayal of a shoe salesman and his cognitively disabled family members. There may even be others, but sociological zeal has not sufficed to get me past the opening sequences of "Major Dad," "Full House," or "Doogie Howser."

Not that "Roseanne" is free of class stereotyping. The Connors must bear part of the psychic burden imposed on all working-class people by their economic and occupational betters: they inhabit a zone of glad-handed gemeinschaft, evocative, now and then, of the stock wedding scene (*The Godfather*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Working Girl*) that routinely signifies lost old-world values. They indulge in a manic physicality that would be unthinkable among the more controlled and genteel Huxtables. They maintain a traditional, low-fiber diet of white bread and macaroni. They are not above a fart joke.

Still, in "Roseanne" I am willing to forgive the stereotypes as markers designed to remind us of where we are: in the home of a construction worker and his minimum-wage wife. Without the reminders, we might not be aware of how thoroughly the deeper prejudices of the professional class are being challenged. Roseanne's fictional husband Dan (played by the irresistibly cuddly John Goodman) drinks domestic beer and dedicates Sundays to football; but far from being a Bunkeresque boor, he looks to this feminist like the fabled "sensitive man" we have all been pining for. He treats his rotund wife like a sex goddess. He picks up on small cues signaling emotional distress. He helps with homework. And when Roseanne works overtime, he cooks, cleans, and rides herd on the kids without any of the piteous whining we have come to expect from upscale males in their rare, and lavishly documented, encounters with soiled Pampers.

Roseanne Connor has her own way of defying the stereotypes. Various employed as a fast-food operative, a factory worker, a bartender, and a telephone salesperson, her real dream is to be a writer. When her twelve-year-old daughter Darlene (brilliantly played by Sara Gilbert) balks at a poetry-writing assign-

ment, Roseanne gives her a little talking-to involving Sylvia Plath: "She inspired quite a few women, including *moi*." In another episode, a middle-aged friend thanks Roseanne for inspiring her to dump her chauvinist husband and go to college. We have come a long way from the dithering, cowering Edith Bunker.

Most of the time the Connors do the usual sitcom things. They have the little domestic misunderstandings that can be patched up in twenty-four minutes with wisecracks and a round of hugs. But "Roseanne" carries working-class verisimilitude into a new and previously taboo dimension—the workplace. In the world of employment, Roseanne knows exactly where she stands: "All the good power jobs are taken. Vanna turns the letters. Leona's got hotels. Margaret's running England . . . 'Course she's not doing a very good job . . ."

And in the workplace as well as the kitchen, Roseanne knows how to dish it out. A friend of mine, herself a denizen of the low-wage end of the work force, claims to have seen an episode in which Roseanne led an occupational health and safety battle at Wellman Plastics. I missed that one, but I have seen her, on more than one occasion, reduce the boss's ego to rubble. At Chicken Divine, for example, she is ordered to work weekends—an impossibility for a working mother—by an officious teenage boss who confides that he doesn't like working weekends either. In a sequence that could have been crafted by Michael

Moore, Roseanne responds: "Well, that's real good 'cause you never do. You sit in your office like a little Napoleon, making up schedules and screwing up people's lives." To which he says, "That's what they pay me for. And you are paid to follow my orders." Blah blah blah. To which she says, staring at him for a long time and then observing with an evil smile: "You know, you got a little prize hanging out of your nose there."

The class conflict continues on other fronts. In one episode, Roseanne arrives late for an appointment with Darlene's history teacher, because she has been forced to work overtime at Wellman.

The teacher, who is leaning against her desk stretching her quadriceps when Roseanne arrives, wants to postpone the appointment because she has a date to play squash. When Roseanne insists, the teacher tells her that Darlene has been barking in class, "like a dog." This she follows with some psychobabble—on emotional problems and dysfunctional families—that would leave most mothers, whatever their social class, clutched with guilt. Not Roseanne, who calmly informs the yuppie snit that, in the Connor household, everybody barks like dogs.



ROSEANNE BARR BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Now this is the kind of class-militant populism that the Democrats, most of them anyway, never seem to get right: up with the little gal; down with the snotty, the pretentious, and the overly paid. At least part of the appeal of "Roseanne" is that it ratifies the resentments of the underdog majority. But this being a sitcom, and Barr being a pacifist, the class-anger never gets too nasty. Even the most loathsome bosses turn out to be human, and in some cases pathetically needy. Rather than hating the bad guys, we end up feeling better about ourselves, which is the function of all good and humanistic humor anyway.

According to high conservative theory, the leftish cast to a show like "Roseanne" must reflect the media manipulations of the alleged "liberal elite." But the politics of "Roseanne"—including its feminist side, which we will get to in a minute—reflects nothing so much as the decidedly un-elite politics of Barr herself. On the Larry King show a few weeks ago, Barr said that she prefers the term "working class" to "blue collar" because (and I paraphrase) it reminds us of the existence of class, a reality that Americans are all too disposed to forget. In

her autobiography, right up front in the preface, she tells us that it is a "book about the women's movement . . . a book about the left."

Roseanne: My Life As a Woman traces her journey from alienation to political commitment. It must stand as another one of Barr's commanding oddities. Where you would expect a standard rags-to-riches story, you find a sort of rags-to-revolution tale: more an intellectual and spiritual memoir than the usual chronicle of fearsome obstacles and lucky breaks. She was born the paradigmatic outsider, a Jew in Mormon Utah, and a low-income Jew at that. Within the Mormon culture, she was the "Other" (her own term), the "designated Heathen" in school Christmas pageants, always being reminded that "had we been in a Communist country, I would never have been allowed to express my religion, because 'dissent' is not tolerated there." At home she was loved and en-

couraged, but the emotional density of the Holocaust-haunted Barr family eventually proved too much for her. After a breakdown and several months of hospitalization, she ran away, at nineteen, to find the sixties, or what was left of them in 1971.

Her hippie phase left Barr with some proto-politics of the peace-and-love variety, three children, and an erratic wage-earner for a husband. It was in this condition that she wandered into the Woman to Woman bookstore on Colfax Avenue in Denver, where she discovered the Movement. Barr seems to have required very little in the way of consciousness-

raising. With one gigantic "click," she jumped right in, joined the collective, and was soon occupied giving "seminars on racism, classism, anti-Semitism, pornography, and taking power." If this seems like a rather sudden leap to political leadership, I can attest from my own experience with venues like *Woman to Woman* that it happens every day.

But even within the ecumenical embrace of feminism, Barr remained the Outsider. "We did not agree anymore," she tells us of her collective, "with Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, or party politics within the women's movement," which she believes has turned into "a professional, careerist women's thing." When she found her "voice," it spoke in a new

tone of working-class existentialism: "I began to speak as a working-class woman who is a mother, a woman who no longer believed in change, progress, growth, or hope." It was this special brand of proletarian feminism that inspired her stand-up comic routine. "I am talking about organizing working-class women and mothers," she tells us, and her comic persona was her way of going about it.

Middle-class feminism has long admitted the possibility of a working-class variant, but the general expectation has been that it would be a diluted version of the "real," or middle-class, thing. According to the conventional wisdom, working-class women would have no truck with the more anti-male aspects of feminism,

and would be repelled by the least insult to the nuclear family. They would be comfortable only with the bread-and-butter issues of pay equity, child care, and parental leave. They would be culturally conservative, sensible, dull.

But we had not met Barr. Her stand-up routine was at first almost too vulgar and castrating for Denver's Comedy Works. In her autobiography, Barr offers an example. Heckled by a drunk for not being "feminine," she turned around, stared at her assailant, and said, "Suck my dick." I wish *Roseanne: My Life As a Woman* gave more examples of her early, Denver-era, stand-up style, but the recently released videotape "Roseanne" (made later in a Los Angeles club) may be a fair representation. On it she promotes a product called "Fem-Rage," designed to overcome female conditioning during that "one day of the month when you're free to be yourself," and leaves her female fans with the memorable question: "Ever put those maxi-pads on adhesive side up?"

In "Roseanne," the sitcom, however, Barr has been considerably tamed. No longer standing bravely, and one must admit mas-

sively, alone with the microphone, she comes to us now embedded in the family: overwhelmed by domestic detail, surrounded by children too young for R-rated language, padding back and forth between stove, refrigerator, and kitchen table. Some of the edge is off here. There are no four-letter words, no menstruation jokes; and Roseanne's male-baiting barbs just bounce off her lovable Dan. Still, what better place for the feminist comic than in a family sitcom? Feminist theory, after all, cut its teeth on the critique of the family. Barr continues the process—leaving huge gaping holes where there was sweetness and piety.

All family sitcoms, of course, teach us that wisecracks and swift put-downs are the preferred modes of affectionate discourse. But Roseanne takes the genre a step further—over the edge, some may say. In the era of big weddings and sudden man shortages, she describes marriage as "a life sentence, without parole." And in the era of the biological time clock and the petted yuppie midlife baby, she can tell Darlene to get a fork out of the drawer and "stick it through your tongue." Or she can say, when Dan asks "Are we missing an offspring?" at breakfast, "Yeah. Where do you think I got the bacon?"

It is Barr's narrow-eyed cynicism about the family, even more than her class consciousness, that gives "Roseanne" its special frisson. Archie Bunker got our attention by telling us that we (blacks, Jews, "ethnics," WASPs, etc.) don't really like each other. Barr's message is that even within the family we don't much like each other. We love each other (who else do we have?); but The Family, with its impacted emotions, its lopsided division of labor, and its ancient system of age-graded humiliations, just doesn't work. Or rather, it doesn't work unless the contradictions are smoothed out with irony and the hostilities are periodically blown off as humor. Coming from mom, rather than from a jaded teenager or a bystander dad, this is scary news indeed.

So Barr's theoretical outlook is, in the best left-feminist tradition, dialectical. On the one hand, she presents the family as a zone of intimacy and support, well worth defending against the forces of capitalism, which drive both mothers and fathers out of the home, scratching around for paychecks. On the other hand, the family is hardly a haven, especially for its grown-up females. It is marred from within by—among other things—the patriarchal division of leisure, which makes dad and the kids the "consumers" of mom's cooking, cleaning, nurturing, and (increasingly) her

Oedipus the King

Hard to forgive Freud, the exposé of fictions,
When he borrows the name of a great mythical king
To cover our common wish not to share mom
With anyone, not even with dad.

Oedipus, solver of riddles too hard for us,
Freud's inspiration and mentor,
Teacher and pupil of one mind with the sphinx
That man is the mystery,
Three people at least in one.
But even Freud, with all his interpreting,
Didn't manage to save a city, as Oedipus did.
Vienna could have done without him,
He knew, and would go on as before,
Winning and wasting.

We never imagine Oedipus one of us
Except for a moment, just after the plague arrives,
When he vows to rid the city of its pollution,
To root the murderer out, no matter where.
We too could have made a mistake like that.
But when the question changes slowly
To who exactly his parents are
We would have stopped, as the prophet advises,
While the King, suspecting the worst, presses on.

Freud may have taken the facts, however painful,
As evidence he was only human,
Alive and desiring.
But Oedipus chooses to be guilty,
To blind himself, to banish himself
And go the gods one better, the father gods
Who didn't love him as a father should.

As for his mother, if he has one then,
It's the earth, who feels him tapping
Her breast with his cane
As he hobbles along outside the walls.
"Where are you going, dear Son?" she calls.
"For you the door to my dark house stands open.
No other house will take you in."

CARL DENNIS

earnings. Mom's job is to keep the whole thing together—to see that the mortgage payments are made, to fend off the viperish teenagers, to find the missing green sock—but mom is no longer interested in being a human sacrifice on the altar of “pro-family values.” She's been down to the feminist bookstore; she's been reading Sylvia Plath.

This is a bleak and radical vision. Not given to didacticism, Barr offers no programmatic ways out. Surely, we are led to conclude, pay equity would help, along with child care, and so on. But Barr leaves us hankering for a quality of change that goes beyond mere reform: for a world in which even the lowliest among us—the hash-slinger, the sock-finder, the factory hand—will be recognized as the poet she truly is.

Maybe this is just too radical. The tabloids have taken to stalking Barr as if she were an unsightly blot on the electronic landscape of our collective dreams. *The*

New York Times just devoted a quarter of a page to some upscale writer's prissy musings on Roseanne. “Was I just being squeamish” for disliking Barr, she asks herself: “a goody-two-shoes suburban feminist who was used to her icons being chic and sugar-coated instead of this gum-chewing, male-bashing . . . working-class mama with a big mouth?” No, apparently she is not squeamish. Barr is just too, well, unfeminine.

We know what Barr would say to that, and exactly how she would say it. Yeah, she's crude, but so are the realities of pain and exploitation she seeks to remind us of. If middle-class feminism can't claim Roseanne, maybe it's gotten a little too dainty for its own good. We have a long tradition of tough-talking females behind us, after all, including that other great working-class spokesperson, Mary “Mother” Jones, who once advised the troops, “Whatever you do, *don't* be ladylike.” •

The Affirmative Action Novel

BY DAVID RIEFF

Mile Zero by Thomas Sanchez

(Knopf, 349 pp., \$19.95)

Every era gets the clichés it deserves. If the Reaganite 1980s were triumphalist in their politics, they were, as far as the arts were concerned, a period in which detachment and cynicism vied with each other for pride of place. It was the last age of Andy Warhol and the first age of Julian Schnabel in painting, and of Robert Wilson in theater. In literature, the minimalists predominated.

The writers, probably because they were less beholden to rich collectors and other Maecenases, still managed to present themselves in the traditional getup of the modern artist: as oppositional figures, muckrakers of urban anomie or rural despair. Quick to take offense when hostile critics drew certain obvious parallels between their books and the political temper of the times, these writers still kept their distance from Reaganism in a way that the painters did not. One can hardly imagine any of the writers agreeing with Warhol's remark, after Reagan's first inaugural, that the president's speech was “exactly what I felt.” Still, there was a remarkable affinity between Reaganite cool and minimalist

cool, in the sense that sophomore euphoria and sophomore despair resemble each other.

Now it is no longer morning in America, Reagan has given evidence in California, and minimalism is showing signs of running out of the extremely low-octane gas on which it has been operating. New clichés have begun elbowing their way forward. The Bush administration has already delivered up the War on Drugs and the invasion of Panama, ventures that, whatever else may be said about them, were anything but impassive. Where Reagan always seemed imperturbable, Bush splutters. And it's not so different out in literary land, tonally if not politically. If the 1980s were cool, a time of epic dispassion and the muting of origins, the 1990s will be almost certainly hot and fulminant, a time of strong effects and dueling ethnicities.

Some of the most highly praised novels of the past season have been rhetorically impassioned, more politically inspired, and at times so hectoringly self-righteous, particularly on the subject of race relations and the environment, that they might as easily have been published

MORAL VALUES ARE NOT ACCESSIBLE

nor can they be defined. To define them, one would have to judge value itself, which is impossible. That is why I have never accepted the notion of a theater of the absurd, a concept that implies a judgment of value. It is not even possible to talk about truth, that's part of the anguish. Paradoxically, through form, by giving form to what is formless, the artist can find a partial way out.

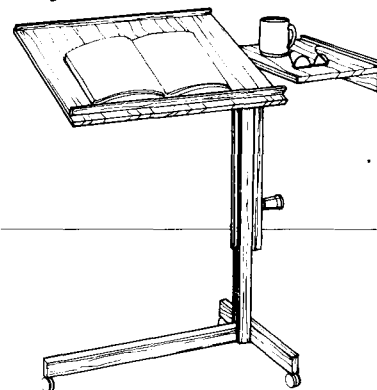
—Samuel Beckett

from “Meeting Beckett”
by Charles Juliet
in the Winter 1989/90
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in 1969. Writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Amy Tan, and Thomas Sanchez are interested principally in non-white Americans, or in the new immigrants from the Third World. It is a great subject; and if this turn simply represented a long overdue broadening of the focus of American writing, or the making of art out of the fact that we are rapidly becoming a genuinely multiracial country, leaking into each other, in Salman Rushdie's lovely phrase, "like flavors when you cook," then the literary news would be wonderful. But instead of art, and despite the emergence of Mukherjee, who is a writer of considerable talent, what is produced is mostly ethnic consciousness-raising, a kind of literary affirmative action in which the merit of the work is measured by the disfranchisement of the author's group. It is hard to tell which is worse, the old minimalist ironies or the new ethnic piousness.

Great works of art rarely tell us as much about the times in which they were written as mediocre ones. One learns about the human heart from Balzac, but for the look and the feel of nineteenth-century French life, for its stereotypes and its received ideas, one turns to his second-rate contemporary Eugene Sue. His characters are too pedestrian as inventions to transcend their time and their place. In our own abraded era, a reader who wants to understand middle-class paranoia (though not quite the people who suffer from it) is well advised to consult *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Tom Wolfe is not, as he imagines, the Balzac of the era, he is its Sue. What he knows about the human spirit could be written on the back of a postcard, but he is a meticulous transcriber of the pungent detail and his book will long be of interest to social historians. And in much the same way, precisely because it is so mediocre and so overpraised, the work of Thomas Sanchez, particularly his most recent novel, *Mile Zero*, is a rich repository of the received ideas most likely to dog us during the run-up to the millennium.

Mile Zero is Sanchez's third novel. His first, *Rabbit Boss*, published in 1973, evoked four generations of Washo Indians in the mountains of Nevada and California. It was justly admired for its anger at the treatment Indians had undergone at the hands of whites. It was also, though few said so at the time, largely unreadable. Sanchez has a weakness for the mystical. In *Rabbit Boss*, the characters are always breaking off their interactions with one another to address the gods, or the sky, or whatever other anthropomorphically freighted object may

have caught their attention. One typical passage reads:

He had returned to the place of their camp by the lake with his father to watch. The journey was effortless, the Earth had turned up black, the snows gone, but when they reached the place on the mountain where he watched them during the winter they were gone, the shore of the lake was untouched. His father wanted to turn back, saying his son had offended the Ghosts and they gave him the dream of the ones with white skins during the winter, it was only a dream, this was his suffering for some grave offense he committed against his Ancestors' memory.

And this grave offense against the English language, which *The San Francisco Chronicle* celebrated for its "beauty of language" and *The Washington Post* described as a "rare and wonderful book," goes on in this vein for most of its 532 pages.

The success of *Rabbit Boss* is a classic example of the way critics take pains to excuse or overlook bad writing when a book seems ethnically ambitious or politically sympathetic. Had Sanchez written a novel in similarly convoluted prose about, say, suburban housewives, the mawkish bombast of his sentences would have been held against him. But *Rabbit Boss* was not judged by literary standards. It was measured, rather, by its fervor and, equally important, by its "authenticity" in rendering the Indian point of view.

Sanchez's admirers claimed repeatedly that the book's mysteriousness (others would say, its incoherence) and its dreamlike quality were a reflection of Indian culture. "I would suspect," wrote one George Morrison, of the Grand Portage band of the Chippewa tribe, "[that Sanchez] is part Indian. Only an Indian could have the insight into the poetry, the complexity of the Indian psyche, and an understanding of the Indian's transition of cultures." To criticize Sanchez's book, therefore, was to impose Western standards where they did not apply. It turns out that, in American literature, not only can you go home again, but home is all you can write about.

The praise lavished on *Rabbit Boss* was more a late, last gasp of the 1960s than the shape of things to come. As minimalism became the favored style for American fiction writers, the ideal of a literature that echoed the aspirations of a particular community or served overtly as a vehicle for some political program seemed to wane, at least outside of feminist circles. By the time Sanchez's second novel, *Zootsuit Murders*, set in wartime Los Angeles during the Pachuco riots, appeared in 1978, politically committed fic-

tion had been stripped of its free pass. In a way this was a pity, because the book is much the best of Sanchez's three novels, free both of the purple prose and gratuitous philosophizing that mar his other work.

For the next eleven years, Sanchez worked on the book that was to become *Mile Zero*. Much has been made about what a struggle it has been for him to complete it, what risks, psychological and physical, the process of creation entailed. There is a story that during the shooting of *Marathon Man* Dustin Hoffman became a fanatical jogger in order to better incarnate his role; and when he asked his co-star, Laurence Olivier, whether he did similar kinds of preparation, Olivier said, "No, I just pretend." It is this part of art—the pretending, the inventing, the lying—that least interests Sanchez.

Mile Zero has been hailed for being grounded in the author's experiences. He had, it appeared, spent a great deal of time in some of the more dangerous parts of Central America and the Caribbean while doing the research for the book, which he had even considered setting in Central America before finally settling on Key West for its locale. He had put himself at risk, he had seen unimaginable things. A fawning profile in *Vanity Fair* contrasted this fiction based on experience in all its Hemingwayesque, even Conradian grandeur with writers who, unlike Sanchez, had never "had the opportunity to travel widely or witness a war." What this had to do with the craft of fiction was left untaught, but the message was clear: eat my dust, you minimalist wimps.

Of course, if the quality of a novel depended on the intrepidity of its author, Stephen Crane would have written better books than Henry James. For a writer with Sanchez's tenuous grip on the English language to condescend to the minimalists was absurd. For all their faults they were obsessed, at least, with the craft of writing. But Sanchez is even less careful with his sentences in *Mile Zero* than he was in *Rabbit Boss*. His writing puts the mess back into messianic. When his prose is not flat, it is wondrously sententious, a clutter of metaphors and similes that do not bear close examination. A few examples:

Justo was as smooth as the gold-plated chicken wishbone hanging from a braided gold chain around his thick neck.

He was?

More roses were tattooed on the breasts of women in Key West than there were real roses in all the fancy Miami flower shops.

There were?

St. Cloud had reeled up a treasure from Lila's submerged past, but the full weight of the bounty's apparent truth was slow in coming.

It was?

Abuelo had arrived in Key West from Havana filled with good nature, cocky promise, and a generous portion of luck, for he was born in 1878 at the end of the failed Ten Years' War, when the Spaniards swung their sword of terrorism with dictatorial precision.

Huh?

Sanchez may have seen as much as he claims, but it has taught him little. What is wrong with his characters, more than anything else, is that they are larger than life, which is another way of saying that they are completely unreal. There is Justo, a black Cuban-American cop who would put Sir Lancelot to shame in the *sans peur et sans reproche* department. "Nothing escaped Justo's brown eyes, not what happened before, not what happened since, such was his formidability." There is St. Cloud, the hero of the book. St. Cloud is a former anti-Vietnam War activist who, his ideals shattered, has drifted down to Key West and become a drunk in mourning for the aforementioned lost ideals, as well as for Evelyn, his ex-wife. (Let's see. Should he be played by Nick Nolte? Harrison Ford? Danny DeVito?)

The other characters in *Mile Zero* pretty much conform to the high standards of verisimilitude set by Justo (Lou Gossett Jr.? Gary Coleman?) and St. Cloud. There is Lila, a desperate Southern girl on the run. "It was not that Lila was not smart, she just never had a chance." Why not? Because "Lila never had a real daddy." Lila is involved with M.K., a mercenary and a dope dealer from the Midwest whom she meets when he drops by to kill her husband. As the brutish Roger lies dying, Lila, who has spent the preceding year watching a French cooking show on TV in the trailer, asks M.K., "Do you all like French cookin'?" And M.K. smiles as he replies, "Long time ago in Saigon, had a Catholic girlfriend, all she ever cooked was French. Can you do *Coquilles Saint-Jacques*?" I am not making this up.

The subsidiary characters who people the book thickly and make its plot difficult to sort out have made the same bee-line from central casting to the printed page. Every one of them is a type, with a name to match: Renoir the dignified gay, a terrified Haitian immigrant named Voltaire, an incarnation of sexuality called Angelica, and Handsomest Jimmy, a two-bit black pimp and dooper. In a certain sense, though, these cardboard figures are entirely suited to the genre in which *Mile Zero* belongs. Take away the pretension that it is a long-overdue anti-

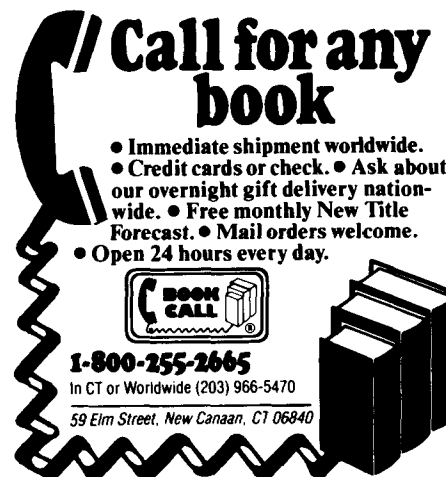
dote to minimalism, and you are left with merely a thriller, another lush, atmospheric pastiche of drugs, voodoo, and murder in the palm latitudes.

A boatload of Haitian refugees, all of them dead except for Voltaire, drifts into Key West harbor, disrupting the final day of the International Powerboat Championships. Justo decides that Voltaire may have killed some of his compatriots during the journey. He enlists St. Cloud (who learned perfect Creole in college twenty years before!) to act as an interpreter. This is the first mystery. The second concerns a series of bizarre crimes that occur in the wake of the boat's arrival. Justo finds his grandfather's grave in the local cemetery smeared with the blood of a South American bufo toad, then a dead goat is found hanging from a bell tower on the outskirts of town. Alongside these dead creatures are notes in English and patois from a mysterious character named Zobop, threatening more mayhem. It seems like voodoo.

A murder follows, at which point Justo sets out in earnest to unmask Zobop and, in the process, to save St. Cloud from himself. He does. Zobop, it turns out, is none other than a sixties casualty called Space Cadet, who has been lurking about the edges of the novel. As for St. Cloud, he is well and truly redeemed, although he does not change his name to St. Clair. At the end of the novel things are looking brighter for the first time since the war in Vietnam began. It seems like his on-again/off-again affair with Lila will work out after all since M.K. has decided to stay in Central America and not return to Key West for more of Lila's *Coquilles Saint-Jacques*.

The story is, well, workmanlike enough. But the abysmal writing still makes you wonder how this novel came to be compared to *Heart of Darkness* and the *New World Symphony*, or sold so well. Clearly *Mile Zero* hit a nerve. Its success demonstrates, for a start, how tired American readers have grown of minimalism: enough impassivity, the literary market seemed to be saying, enough remoteness. Whatever else can be said about Sanchez, he is the antithesis of cool. And the other, more important reason why his book struck such a chord is also extra-literary.

Although the minimalists were, are, anything but cheerful in their portraits of American life, their gloom and pain tended, when it was not strictly biographical and psychological, to resignation, to quietism and an abdication of politics. If transcendence seems impossible in Richard Ford's Middle America or in Brett Ellis's West Los Angeles and Bennington, it is no one's fault but their own. In this sense, the minimalists sim-



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ply put a despairing spin on Gatsby's frontier assumption that at any moment he could blot out the past and start over. Sanchez will have none of this. If his characters are in trouble, he blames society. Everyone in *Mile Zero*, hero and villain alike, is a victim of the system.

St. Cloud, for example, has not become a beach bum out of some personal choice, but because he feels bad about Vietnam. "He was part of the generation conceived under the cloud of Hiroshima and came of age during the time of Vietnam, one of Uncle Sammy's marked babies. A strange stain of guilt covered him, an implacable atomic dust gnawed at his essence." Crazy old Zobop committed his crimes because the despoliation of the ecology of the Florida Keys had driven him mad. The two sections of the novel that give Zobop's apocalyptic monologues, printed on gray paper to set them off from the rest of the book, are rendered so enthusiastically that they seem to represent the author's own point of view. "I right the way, I write the way. I write. I am witness," sounds more like Sanchez talking. In his universe of victims, panting for the millennium, or at least for reparations, it

is the author and his characters who tend to run together like cooking flavors.

Perhaps readers are so eager for a book that is both impeccably radical and a good yarn that they don't notice that *Mile Zero* reads more like a book written according to affirmative action guidelines (the good black cop, the dignified gay, the conscience-stricken Anglo) than according to the demands of art. For those, like myself, who despair over the conduct of the United States in the world and still believe in affirmative action, perhaps this response is understandable. Still, these new clichés will not save us. Indeed, like any debasement of language, they will only do us harm. Yes, Sanchez, unlike some of the writers of the 1980s, has tried to swallow a big theme whole. And yes, Melville was right when he said you could not make great art on the back of a flea. But Melville could write, while Sanchez can only splutter, and it is not a good sign that his hollow radical blarney is being mistaken for literature.

DAVID RIEFF is the author of *Going to Miami* (Little, Brown) and is currently writing a book about Los Angeles.

and its steadiness of belief in the wholeness and stature of Holmes as a man.

The Holmes we come to know from Novick is an unreconstructed aristocrat, a conservative in politics and economics, a gentleman of the old school in persona and lifestyle (though not without a racy, even sensual streak) who lived out his dream on a grand scale and transformed legal and constitutional thought. By birth, breeding, and brilliance a member of New England's intellectual aristocracy, Holmes early mapped out a trajectory for himself. William James chose medicine and (later) psychology, his brother Henry chose literature, Henry and Brooks Adams chose history, and Holmes chose the law. In time he turned law into history, psychology, and literature as well. They formed a close elite that attended the same schools, discussed the same new doctrines from Europe, and "walked out" with the same young women. There was no lonely alien among them to intrude his upwardly-mobile dreams and drives into their universe.

There was an element of Puritan ice in that blue blood of a democratic caste. It exacted its psychic costs in the febrile quality that one sees in both James brothers, in Clover Adams (Henry's tragic wife), in Minnie Temple—beautiful and brittle—whom everyone courted (including Holmes), and indeed in Fanny Dixwell, whom Holmes finally married. He, too, had to face and overcome, as an adolescent, the daunting symbols of a talkative and prolific father who had become a literary celebrity, a mother devoted to raising her talented son but also to "causes," and an already deflated Unitarian God whom Wendell had to square with the emerging evolutionary science of the time.

There can be no understanding Holmes without seeing the Civil War as a resonant theme in his life. In the war of brother against brother, on three occasions, the wild chances of the battlefield left him seriously wounded, narrowly escaping death. It settled the "God question" for good and brought the "death line" into his thinking. He entered the war a boy (he was to say) and emerged a man. His critics have found his martial values darkly forbidding, but they were his way of saying that human life was not an end in itself, that it was validated by a larger faith: by duty, courage, and honor, and a set of philosophic "can't helps," and a feeling for man's quest within the evolutionary path to his destiny in an unheeding cosmos.

Holmes pursued the law in a relentless campaign of ambition-drenched work. He braved the "black and frozen night"

The Spirit and the Laws

BY MAX LERNER

Honorable Justice: The Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes by Sheldon M. Novick

(Little, Brown, 544 pp., \$24.95)

Why did America's greatest jurist have to wait more than a half century after his death for a complete life? Sheldon M. Novick's answer is the readiest one, that the men who successively had access to his letters and papers proved too busy (Felix Frankfurter) or died midway in the task (Mark De Wolfe Howe) or were discouraged and gave up (Grant Gilmore). Consider an added answer: that the biographer who grapples with so far-reaching and influential a life must himself emerge from the afterlife of his subject's reputation.

Oliver Wendell Holmes resigned from the Supreme Court in 1932 and died in 1935. From the forties well into the seventies, the climate of the law schools that guard the remembrance of jurists past grew steadily more hostile to Holmes; and only in the late seventies and early eighties did new influences emerge in

the legal culture that affected a change of attitude. Novick's *Honorable Justice*, homage without irony up front in the title, is the first result. Several other lives, long in preparation, are on their way. The "Grand Panjandrum," as one of his law clerks called him, had a confident notion of his destiny.

The two-volume unfinished biography by Mark Howe, which Novick has put to good use, stopped short of his judicial career, at forty-one. For the remaining fifty-three years, the harvest of the early sowing, Novick was on his own, with no Holmes canon to guide his scale, selection, interpretation. Where Howe was fascinated by the development of Holmes's mind, tracing his reading and thinking in their first creative phase, Novick's is the first full biography, keeping the personal Holmes in view, forgoing any intellectual excursions that might lose him. The book's strength lies in its fast-paced vividness of narrative

of the law lectures and law books, did apprentice work at a law office, buried himself in the old English "Yearbooks" while revising *Kent's Commentaries*, and strove to prove that "a man can live greatly in the law as elsewhere." "Living greatly" didn't exclude ambition. In a letter to his brother, William James cast a cold eye on their friend Wendell's "deeply self-grooved" concentration on his career. But Holmes had a notion that unless you made something of yourself by the age of forty, you never would.

Thus he seized the chance to deliver some Lowell Lectures at Harvard, and sweated to articulate the binding theme of law as a continuity, emerging over time from ingrained social experience. Two evenings a week, for six weeks, Holmes faced a distinguished audience drawn from a New England culture that had awakened to Emerson's call for "the American scholar." He poured into the lectures everything he thought of history, philosophy, law, and primitive societies. The lectures became *The Common Law*. The first copy arrived a day before his fortieth birthday, and the book became a classic.

His life was marked by cycles of creativity. The 1870s were his first cycle. Still in his thirties, he contrived a method of logical analysis that served him for a lifetime. It exposed the role of slowly evolving human institutions, striving within the frame of often "inarticulate" human drives to shape the major concepts of the common law. Law was not some "brooding omnipresence in the sky." It was, quite simply, what the courts do. The task of judges, taking account of the "felt necessities" of the time, was to draw the line between competing sets of social desirabilities.

But this analytic method was incomplete unless Holmes could manage to apply it. When an opening on the Massachusetts Court came, Holmes called it a "stroke of lightning," although he had lobbied discreetly for it on three occasions with no result. He gave up his Harvard post; and riding circuit through the state, listening to the cases that jugged out of the earth of people's daily lives, he had a second burst of creative excitement, testing his method against their experience. The result was an almost manic outflowing of opinions that are now acknowledged to have revolutionized American private law.

As his stay on the state court stretched to twenty years, however, his zest flagged. He feared that he might end his life as a major luminary on a minor court. Then an anarchist's bullet exploded into another "stroke of lightning," and with

McKinley's death and Theodore Roosevelt's succession to the presidency, Holmes got the seat he had longed for. It was fateful, hairsbreadth timing. Holmes was sixty-one, almost no longer *papabile* for the high post. Once on the Supreme Court, however, he was, says Novick, "like a young boy." He wrote opinions feverishly. It was his third burst of creativity, from his *Lochner* dissent in 1905 through the great free speech opinions at the turn of the 1920s—that is to say, from his mid-sixties to his early eighties.

We might call the stretch between *Lochner* and the free speech cases the "Holmesian moment" in American juristic history. It was the time when Holmes's doctrine of "judicial deference" (we now call it "judicial restraint"), along with his theory of free trade in ideas, fought their way to acceptance. After that, in the twenties, the Court majority grew more tolerant of state legislative action and more hostile to the Holmes doctrine that "the constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory." Holmes was swimming against the current. But his concept of judicial restraint turned out to be a brilliant strategy in the battle against the reactionary Court of the twenties, and was employed even more effectively in the New Deal thirties, after his resignation. Six decades later, although it has assumed new forms, it is still a major strategy, operating against excessive Court activism that crowd state legislation too severely.

If Holmes's colleagues on the Supreme Court thought that the new judge from a state court would be awed into knowing his place, they quickly learned better. It took only a few years before his dissent in the *Northern Securities* trust case (1903) showed he had a mind of his own, irking the majority and enraging Roosevelt. Two years later the brief *Lochner* essay revealed the shaping idea in that mind—the doctrine of judicial deference to "reasonable" acts of legislators. It reminded his colleagues that they were not gods, only humans in need of examining their biases. Even while his opinions more often got majorities than not, they didn't love him for it. But Holmes scorned lobbying for their votes, as he scorned the Court infighting that could have made him chief justice.

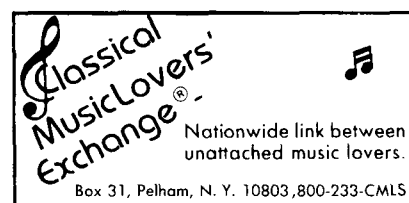
By the twenties, however, fame—Milton's "last infirmity of noble minds"—enveloped him in its transforming mantle. The isolation in which he had worked turned into a triumphant reign as a larger-than-life "Olympian." But the time of his triumph proved also

the time when his stream of originality dried up. He took his fame with grace, but it was a grace not unmixed with pathos, as his physical and mental powers diminished in the early twenties.

Even while Holmes felt he was a lonely fighter under Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, a new law school culture was being shaped, influenced by the intellectual renaissance of the first two decades of the century. Some of the men attached to Holmes—Frankfurter, Harold Laski, Morris Cohen, Benjamin Cardozo, Brandeis himself—were independent spirits in the universities and on the bench. Others, notably Karl Llewellyn, Jerome Frank, Thurman Arnold, and Walton Hamilton, were part of the school of "legal realism," mostly at Yale and Harvard, that made an icon of Holmes. In the wave of repression of civil freedoms that came during the war and the postwar years, Holmes's free speech philosophy was a godsend.

Novick rightly notes how many in this little band that paid homage to Holmes were Jews. One of the explanations he cites is that Holmes came to feel a kinship with Jews as "intellectual Brahmins." In a letter to Cohen he even floated a speculation that the Wendells had originally been Dutch Jews, the Van Dells. More prosaically, the liberal intensity of the intellectual revival, coupled with the new role of university lawyers in Wilson's war administration, had done much to dissolve the glacial anti-Semitism of the academies. The young Jews in the new legal culture, exulting in their liberation, were drawn to Holmes as the fulfillment of an old Jewish dream of the republic of the mind, and he—childless, austere—warmed to them as the dream children he had never had, who made him a patriarch.

Shortly after the free speech opinions, in 1922, Holmes underwent traumatic surgery that kept him hospitalized for four interminable months. (In 1925 and 1926, as a fellow at the Brookings Graduate School that happened to occupy the house next to Holmes's, I had a chance to watch the author of the fiery, cutting prose I had been reading with Walton Hamilton during the morning come down the steps every noon for what we called his daily "constitutional." Even on the arm of his current law secretary, he seemed straight and soldierly.) By the time FDR, newly installed in the



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White House, came to see him, Holmes had suffered what was probably a stroke, feeling that "something had dropped out" of him. He found it harder to write, did fewer opinions, dozed off in conference. It was a desolating experience for a man who had lived on the spontaneous harmony of thought, word, and pen. Yet when Roosevelt asked him what advice he would give, Holmes's answer was ritually ready: "Form your battalions and fight!" When Roosevelt left (Novick doesn't give this story) Holmes said: "A second-class intellect, but a first-class temperament." It may have been the last judgment delivered by a man whom history will rate first-class on both counts.

Holmes had expressed a fear of staying on the Court beyond his power to carry his weight. "To live is to function," he said in a radio address on his ninetieth birthday. Its corollary—if you are no longer functioning you are no longer alive—may have been too dour for him to face, so he persisted in getting reassurance from the work he loved. When Chief Justice Hughes, a steadfast admirer, came to tell him that a majority of his colleagues felt he should retire, the old soldier wrote out his own dismissal, and Hughes wept as he left. He died a few days short of ninety-four, as stoic and solitary in his going as he had been during his great bursts of creativity, when he lit up the dreary wasteland of American law.

Novick tells Holmes's story with verve, insight, and a command of his material. Even his footnotes capture the reader. I wish that they were in the text. I refer to Novick's long and eloquent discussions of due process, judicial deference, the common law, the tension between freedom and national survival, and other nuances of Holmes's constitutional doctrine. Indeed, his book runs the danger of becoming two books—one in front for the common reader, the other in the back with the commentary for the student and scholar. Many of the plums have to be hunted down. Holmes was the kind of thinker whose life and thought, both highly complex, illuminate each other, and should not be divided.

Yet some questions remain unanswered, some even unasked. One concerns Holmes's personal relations. He was by nature convivial and loved talk, women, dinner parties. Yet he waited to marry until he was thirty-one and then chose Fanny Dixwell—plain, acerbic, withdrawn—for whom invalidism became a vocation. Why? There is a hint, in one of his father's letters, that Holmes felt a "fidelity" to her because he had

waited so long before claiming her. The marriage proved childless, for reasons we are left to guess at. Was it also sensually joyless? Since Fanny did not "go out" in society, and found travel and social badinage with Holmes's friends in Europe burdensome, Holmes fell back on flirtations at dinners and teas with attractive wives of Washington diplomats, or trips to Europe that Fanny permitted—even encouraged—him to make.

Novick is the first to publish extensive excerpts from a Harvard archive of passionate love letters from Holmes to Lady Emily Castletown, daughter of a viscount and wife to an Irish baron. When they met she was forty-three, Holmes fifty-four. Holmes directed her to write him at his chambers in Boston, away from Fanny's eyes. He reports feasting on her letters, then burning them. He wrote his own in the same secrecy, sometimes from the bench as the lawyers argued their cases. Novick reprints extended passages without placing them in the larger scheme of Holmes's temperament, psyche, character. He describes Holmes as a "womanizer," a curiously soggy term out of harmony with the letters themselves.

The Castletown letters are, in their way, as splendid in style as any he wrote to Laski and Sir Frederick Pollock, but with the added force of passion. Take the first, written on the boat the day after his memorable evenings with her in the conservatory at the castle: "It is the stopping so sudden that hurts . . . I can only cling to your hand . . . until earth puts its shoulder between us— which is more than the world can do I hope for 20 years." And the last: "And now do you think that you can meet time and distraction and still care for me as much? I believe you will . . . oh my dear what a joy it is to feel the inner chambers of one's soul open for the other to walk in and out at will." Here is the pure distillation of Holmes as gallant—but also as the incarnation of hunger. It should put to rest forever the charge, by Holmes's critics, of his essential "coldness." This passion lingered for some thirteen years and five European trips, outlasted its prime and declined to a friendship with memories. And, whether Fanny guessed at the romance or not, her marriage to Holmes survived until her death at eighty-eight.

In one of the Castletown letters we get a rare glimpse of an inner layer of Holmes's sense of self. "I wish I knew more definitely," he wrote in the flush of their romance, "why you were always sad. . . . I have some things to be sad about for one . . . yet I am such a

damned egoist, I am so full of my work, so eager to prove my power—that I get the fundamental vital happiness out of life in spite of everything." The life force—he often called it *vis viva*—took up its abode in Holmes early, and it stayed with him. He honored the "passions and actions of which a man must have a share . . . at the peril of being judged not to have lived."

Novick suggests that Holmes felt twinges of guilt about his romance. A 1910 letter shows him reading a passage of the *Purgatorio* where a troubadour spoke to Dante out of the flames: "I am Arnaut who weeps and goes singing." The line "pierced his marrow," says Novick, since Holmes, like Arnaut, had gained little recognition outside of a small group. And the author adds, "I do not know whether it also struck Holmes that Arnaut was being punished for indulging in lust." It is a strong word to use for someone as un-Puritanical as Holmes, with as persistent a joy in life. I doubt that he was immersed in his own purgatory. He may well have been stirred, a decade after the first intensity of his feeling for Lady Castletown, by the sudden consciousness that he too wept and went on singing.

What deserves to survive of Holmes? Novick thinks his personality and his character, more than the body of his legal thought. It is a judgment others have made as well. Richard Rovere, writing in the late fifties, felt that he was, above all, a witty companion, fast of tongue and taste, a sort of Dr. Johnson of our century. But surely this confines Holmes overmuch. An American Goethe would be more like it, and not an outrageous exaggeration. Holmes, too, was a universal man, a romantic as well as a naturalist, and his illuminations and epigrams came out of a lifetime of wrestling with the demons of style and thought.

Which is why I wish that Novick had not been content with narrating Holmes's life down to its anti-climactic end. There remains the story of the rise of Holmes's reputation in the twenties and thirties, its subjection to the fire of the post-Roosevelt Democratic legal culture in the late forties and fifties, its fall during the febrile Warren Court decades in the sixties and early seventies, and its resurgence in the later seventies and the eighties. Holmes had the feel of immortality in his bones. With such a man, life doesn't stop with death.

MAX LERNER is the author of, among other books, *The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes*, which has recently been reissued by Transaction.

The Dawn of Reading

BY G. W. BOWERSOCK

Oral Tradition & Written Record in Classical Athens by Rosalind Thomas

(Cambridge University Press, 334 pp., \$42.50)

Ancient Literacy by William V. Harris

(Harvard University Press, 398 pp., \$35)

In the study of a culture as rich in written documents as classical antiquity, oral traditions used to be assigned an insignificant role. When Milman Parry went to the Balkans between the two world wars, however, he brought back recordings of oral poets whose vast epics, recited from memory, appeared to parallel in form (if not in quality) the Homeric poems. Memory and oral transmission suddenly seemed to be the key to the culture of early Greece, and oral composition was thought to explain the unique language and phrasing of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Parry's fieldwork was heady stuff for classical scholars, more at home in libraries than in rural Yugoslavia. They were prepared to believe that the poor quality of the poems that Parry recorded was just an accident. One day a Yugoslavian Homer would arise.

No sooner had a few bold souls dared to contest the reality of an oral Homer in favor of a literate or a partly literate poet when another and far more broadly based study of oral culture appeared. It came from an anthropologist, whose work offered a hope of ultimately recovering the history of illiterate societies. An Vansina's enormously influential work, *Oral Traditions*, first published in 1961, emphasized the chain of oral transmission and the accurate perpetuation of details. But since those details could equally well be true or false, a proper methodology for handling them was called for. Vansina opened up dazzlingly new perspectives, most notoriously for Alex Haley but also for students of classical antiquity; the study of oral transmission and memory was carried on, with great success, into medieval history in A. T. Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record* (1979).

It was inevitable that oral traditions would provoke a renewed examination of literacy and its implications. Another

anthropologist, Jack Goody, in a series of publications beginning with "The Consequences of Literacy," written in 1962 with Ian Watt, argued that literacy was what caused rational thought, logic, and even democracy in human societies. This view came under heavy fire, in turn, for espousing "technological determinism." The case was made (as in Brian Street's *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, in 1984) that literacy was the reflection of prevalent customs and beliefs, rather than the determinant of them.

Of course, for a long time it had seemed perfectly obvious to most people that there was some kind of correlation between literacy and civilization. Over 200 years ago Edward Gibbon wrote, "The use of letters is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages, incapable of knowledge or reflection." Gibbon made this observation in an account of the primitive life of the ancient Germans, and he was alluding to the Roman historian Tacitus, who connected the condition of barbarians with their lack of literacy. "The men," wrote Tacitus of the Germans, "are just as ignorant as the women of the secrets of writing." Tacitus was obviously used to illiterate women, but not to illiterate men.

In her new book on oral tradition and written record in classical Athens (the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.), Rosalind Thomas begins with Gibbon's opinion, which she acknowledges ruefully recurs even today. She is eager to break down the distinction between oral and literate societies, and particularly to annihilate the relationship between literacy and civilization as we know it. Although this may come as a surprise to the average reader, what Thomas is saying is by now a new orthodoxy. And in writing a general history of literacy in the classical world, from archaic Greece to late antiquity, William Harris is no more impressed

than Thomas by the claims of writing in a civilized culture.

Harris's book makes very good reading and shows a scholar in full command of the complicated evidence of inscriptions, papyri, graffiti, and book production. It is more than a little strange, therefore, that one who knows the writings of the ancients so well should come to the conclusion that, for most of the time, no more than ten percent of the population was likely to have been significantly literate. Both Thomas and Harris spend perhaps more time than is necessary in chiding their predecessors. Polemic is an established scholarly habit, but in this case it is disquieting. The views of Gibbon and Tacitus, after all, were never unreasonable, nor are they now. One cannot help smiling when people who make a living by writing theses and books instruct us on the unimportance of writing.

Yet Thomas and Harris go about their work of demolition in rather different ways. Thomas is unrelentingly earnest, unforgivably repetitive. We are told over and over again that oral traditions can coexist alongside literate ones, and that it is wrong to make sharp distinctions between oral and literate cultures. The point is obviously correct. It is simply presupposed throughout by Harris, who says breezily at the end of his book that the written culture of antiquity "co-existed with elements of an oral culture." Unlike Thomas, who preaches with doctoral zeal, Harris acknowledges and even exploits the surprise that he knows he will arouse in his readers. In his preface, he recognizes that his book is likely "to cause severe mental indigestion." And in his final pages he says forthrightly, "These conclusions will be highly unpalatable to some classical scholars." So they are. We can now look forward to a substantial discussion of Harris's minimalist view of literacy in the ancient world. But the discussion is unlikely to diminish the value of Harris's book. It will remain for at least a generation as the most authoritative and accessible general survey of literacy in classical antiquity.

Thomas believes that it is of no particular interest to determine, or even to estimate, the extent of literacy in culture. What is much more important, for her, is *how* literacy and oral tradition are used. Her concern, reasonably enough, is the interaction between the spoken word and the written word, the implications of individual and collective memory, and the authority accorded to the two traditions. She is free, therefore, to avoid the question of how many Athenians were literate in the time of Euripides. Some

years ago Eric Havelock stirred up a lively controversy by suggesting that the Athenians were largely illiterate until the later fifth century B.C., when all of a sudden they discovered writing and went wild over it. What is important for Thomas (and I think she may be right for the fifth century B.C., if not the fourth) is that, even when there was some degree of literacy in the Athenian population, it was the oral tradition that was judged the most important and the most authoritative. She cites tellingly Plato's famous account of the evils of literacy, as put in the mouth of Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. Writing weakens the memory and fosters forgetfulness. But then the Platonic Socrates is not very often a spokesman for the prevalent opinion of his time.

Harris takes a similar view of oral tradition, and uses it as a justification for postulating a low level of literacy in classical Athens. He agrees with Thomas that the great historians of the fifth century B.C., Herodotus and Thucydides, based their work to a large extent on oral sources, and were generally uninterested in the recording of written evidence. Even the documents that survive in the text of Thucydides seem to be a kind of mnemonic aid inserted in the text before it reached its completed state. It is of considerable significance for Harris's argument that the introduction of the alphabet in Greece led to no visible spread of literacy for hundreds of years. The growth of Greek culture and political institutions from the middle of the eighth century B.C., when most people would place the arrival of the alphabet from the Phoenicians, proceeded impressively without much writing at all. The early Spartans appear to have had such a poor view of literacy that they actually forbade the writing down of laws. If Martin Bernal is to be believed in his view that the alphabet arrived several centuries earlier than has hitherto been supposed, the historical insignificance of writing in the evolution of early Greek culture will be even more pronounced.

And yet the Greeks and the Romans clearly prized literacy. There are many tributes to its importance, and even to its close connection with civilization. Thomas culpably avoids this material, whereas Harris, with characteristic candor, presents it to dismiss it. Aristotle declared, in the *Politics*, that writing was useful for business, household economy, learning, and many forms of political activity. In his comments he is not all that far away from Gibbon, who, as so often, faithfully represented the ancient point of view: "We may safely pronounce that, without some species of writing, no people has

ever preserved the faithful annals of their history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or even possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable arts of life."

In a remarkable passage in the vast history by Diodorus of Sicily, we are told that it is by means of literacy that "the most important and the most useful of life's business is completed—votes, letters, testaments, laws, and everything else which puts life on the right track. Who could compose a worthy encomium of literacy?" In the late fifth century, during the very time that Thomas is examining, Euripides makes characters in his plays praise the written word. In a surviving fragment of the lost drama *Palamedes*, the hero of the title, who was thought to have been the inventor of writing, praises it for making international communication possible, for its use in law and the settling of disputes, and presumably much else besides. In Euripides' *Suppliants*, Theseus delivers an eloquent speech in praise of written law.

What is one to make of all the ancient encomiums of literacy if, as Harris suggests, no more than ten percent of the total population was literate (with a possible short-lived exception in the third and second centuries B.C.)? Amazingly, Harris uses these texts in support of his own minimalist view. He believes that the praise of literacy means that it was not widespread, and was therefore valued as a rare and precious thing. "No one," he declares, "would praise writing in a modern literary work." This is a dubious proposition, to which Gibbon himself gives the lie. Tacitus's remark about the German barbarians—"the men are just as ignorant as the women of the secrets of writing"—is perhaps even more decisive than the encomiums. It is clear that Tacitus believed that, in the civilized and corrupt world to which he belonged, men were largely literate, whereas women were not. Harris is persuasive on the inequality of literacy in antiquity, and he documents it well. But Tacitus would certainly have been startled to find himself as a writer assigned to a literate minority of males.

Harris rightly emphasizes that you cannot expect widespread literacy without teachers and schools, and for long stretches of antiquity these are not easy to see. When they do come clearly into view, though, as for example in the Hellenistic period, they scarcely look like an overnight innovation. Harris acknowledges that the educational foundations that were established in the third and second centuries B.C. for the subsidy of

teachers "presumably coincided with expressly formulated theories." There is no reason to think that these theories were expressly formulated at that very moment.

The most remarkable of the foundations was at Teos, on the west coast of Asia Minor. A citizen of the city provided 34,000 drachmas as capital endowment to provide an annual income of 3,900 drachmas for the salaries of teachers. It was understood that all the free boys of the city were to be educated under the terms of this endowment, and that three of the teachers were to teach girls (although how many is not clear). The Teos donation may be unusual in providing for the universal education of boys and the partial education of girls, but it is hard to believe that it is merely the eccentricity of some local oddball in the provinces. Teos belonged, to be sure, to the Hellenic East of the Mediterranean world. In the West the situation may have been different, although perhaps not quite so different as Harris thinks. He proposes that the overall literacy of the western provinces of the Roman Empire did not even rise into the range of five to ten percent.

If we acknowledge, as Thomas and Harris insist we should, that certain forms of public writing, such as monumental inscriptions, tell more about symbols than about literacy, that does not necessarily mean that spectators should be presumed unable to read what is in front of them. How many visitors to Washington, D.C., stop to read all inscribed texts they walk past? These inscriptions undoubtedly have symbolic and inspirational value, but they can also be read, and many people who fail to read them are perfectly competent to do so. Popular literacy is a tricky problem. The concept of semiliteracy papers over the whole problem of ill-educated writers with a limited repertoire (perhaps no more than their signature). Still, if it is true, as it probably is, that in some parts of Egypt no embarrassment attached to being illiterate, as the frequent use of public scribes suggests, this does not mean that the situation was the same everywhere. Graffiti pose a problem that gives Harris considerable trouble. Ordinary people wrote them, not only at Pompeii but all over the stones of the eastern desert. These graffiti may sometimes betoken only a limited literacy, but by no means always.

It might be helpful to look more closely into what used to be considered popular literature in the ancient world. Literary critics in recent years have done much to illuminate the ancient Greek novel (and all the texts are now conve-

niently available in English translation in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, edited by B. P. Reardon), but we are still waiting for a historical appreciation of these texts. Whoever read them in antiquity must have had very good Greek. They are works of artistic subtlety. Yet the plots and stories are of a traditional and often banal character that would imply leisure reading. The novels as a fictional genre come in a direct line from the Homeric epics, but they were written in prose to be read. The old epics had been composed in verse to be heard.

Turning away from the inscriptions, papyri, and graffiti and leaving aside the pulp fiction, we have still to confront the tremendous body of literature—drama, lyric, history, philosophy, satire, biography, written epic, technical treatises, and much more—produced by the Greeks and the Romans. There is no denying

that much of it is indebted to an oral tradition and, in some cases, reflects that tradition directly. But it is nonetheless hard, if not impossible, to believe that literature of the quality, quantity, and enduring value of that of Greece and Rome was the product of a society that was, for most of the time, no more than ten percent literate. There must be something wrong. The professorial reaction against a highly literate ancient civilization seems to have gone too far. Perhaps Rosalind Thomas is right in telling us that there is simply no point in trying to estimate the size of a literate population in the past.

G. W. BOWERSOCK is a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and author of the forthcoming *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (University of Michigan Press).

Made in America

BY JEFFERY PAINE

Fabricating Lives: Explorations in American Autobiography by Herbert Leibowitz

(Knopf, 386 pp., \$24.95)

If poets are the world's unacknowledged legislators, autobiographers must settle for lesser billing. Perhaps they may be called the architects of the houses they—and, indirectly, their readers—live in. Simply mentioning the names of Augustine, Montaigne, Rousseau suggests how autobiographies have helped fashion different ways of thinking about the self and its expression, shaping new sensibilities and new understandings of what a human being is. Yet neither Augustine nor Montaigne nor Rousseau could claim to have written an autobiography—if for no other reason than that the word did not exist.

The word "autobiography" was first used in the late eighteenth century, in the same years that the American Republic was coming into being. It was hardly a coincidence that, in 1771, Benjamin Franklin wrote his famous letters predicting the American Revolution and its successful outcome, and two weeks later sat down to write his biography, which was to provide a model for living in the new land. And Perry Miller noted of New England that "almost every literate Puritan kept some sort of journal." This biographical/autobio-

graphical impulse has pervaded every region and every period in American history, down to our own popular blank journal-books and *People* magazine. The words of Herbert Leibowitz's subtitle, *Explorations in American Autobiography*, call attention to a conjunction well worth elucidating.

Leibowitz peers at eight autobiographies, beginning with the sensible, obvious choice of *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. After Franklin, his principle of selection defies comprehension. Some of the autobiographies that Leibowitz considers, like the amorphous prose William Carlos Williams typed practically non-stop as an antidote to depression, are distinguished mainly for undistinguished writing. Another of Leibowitz's "American autobiographers" (Emma Goldman) is not American by birth or upbringing or political outlook. To make matters more perplexing, Leibowitz does not even claim that his choices (Jane Addams, Gertrude Stein, Richard Wright, Edward Dahlberg, Louis Sullivan, in addition to Franklin, Goldman, and Williams) are the right ones. "Another curator" of American autobiography, he says nonchalantly, "might wish to exhibit other

works and styles, which could equally illuminate the genre."

Still, Leibowitz has a thesis, which is just as well for a study of eight randomly chosen works. His argument rests on the notion of distinction. "The grand theme of American autobiography, almost its fixation," Leibowitz claims, "is the quest for distinction, a quest that has shaped and deranged American identity throughout our history." Americans, freed or bereft of traditional stations and feudal hierarchies, have had to distinguish their position on an individual basis, by individual efforts.

Leibowitz's idea of distinction, of course, is not exactly new. John Adams observed that "the revolutionary abandonment of inherited titles and aristocratic rank makes everyone compete all the more fiercely for the 'distinction.'" The alternative to distinction— anonymity or neglect—was, Adams said, "worse than poverty" and as painful as gout. Yet distinction is an aristocratic virtue, at odds with democratic values. Adams stopped writing about distinction when he was accused of wishing to restore monarchy.

Having posed the question of distinction, Leibowitz's task is the instructive one of showing how each autobiographer tried to reconcile the eminence that set him apart with the democratic society that included him. Only in the very beginning, in the case of Franklin, do individual attainment and democratic society seem harmoniously compatible. Indeed, Franklin wrote his *Autobiography* to direct his countrymen, by precept, down that same road from humble origins to worldly achievement that he had navigated. If self and society ever jangled momentarily, Franklin's advice was to fudge: dissemble, he says, a little hypocrisy is good for you. But Franklin's own blithe fudging, his cheerful assumption that his and America's goals were synonymous, disconcerts Leibowitz; and he comments sarcastically that Franklin was "the only person in American history without an unconscious."

Leibowitz's next autobiographer, Louis Sullivan, the Chicago architect of early skyscrapers who coined the phrase "form follows function," continued Franklin's panegyric to democracy. But when Sullivan broke off with his public-relations partner, his hauteur and independence alienated his commercial clients. "A Genius," Frank Lloyd Wright wrote of Sullivan. "Well, that term damned him as it was intended to do. It will write off any man from the commercial scene we live in." With his career on the slide, Sullivan's wife left him; he lost

his home; eventually he was evicted from a building he had designed, unable to pay the rent. Writing *The Autobiography of an Idea* in a shabby room, Sullivan still believed that the architect and the people were grand allies; believing this, Sullivan lacked any theory or explanation to account for why the American democracy had rejected talents meant only to enhance it.

After Sullivan, the autobiographer's tale in this country sheds its innocence. In these eight lives, a pattern emerges. What began so felicitously, that marriage of the individual's interests and society's interests, dissolves, life by life, until "self" and "society" stand opposed across a great divide. Jane Addams, who started the Hull House settlement project in Chicago, found injustices radiating through the various classes, but she believed an individual still might repair the worst. For Emma Goldman, the whole public sphere, American society itself, was rotten to the core, and blowing it up with a revolution was the only hope. Gertrude Stein abandoned America entirely, immigrating to Paris. Edward Dahlberg (1900-77) perfected an asocial nihilism in which "the truth is that we can only perfect our vices." Stein and Dahlberg not only rejected any social analysis when thinking of themselves; each also invented an idiosyncratic language, a style—Stein's flat statements and repetitions, which she mistakenly called Cubism; Dahlberg's Elizabethan elegance and Thomas Brownean convolution—unlike anything their countrymen, or indeed anyone, had ever spoken.

In *Fabricating Lives*, then, as the quest for distinction becomes ever more private, all the elements that once defined a person—civic community, religion, family, economic status—are stripped from the "self" and are instead projected or considered parts of the society that stand opposite the individual. All this is very neat, satisfyingly symmetrical. Is it true? Leibowitz is uneasy with theory, and except for his idea about distinction, he escapes from it altogether into rather impressionistic discussions about style. He doesn't discuss psychology at all.

More important, he alternates between two models of personality—the "modern" and the "postmodern"—that flatly contradict each other, though he seems not to notice. For Leibowitz, half the time there is a "true self," a "real me," whose actions are either a sincere or an inauthentic representation. Thus Franklin's "artful dodging" cannot be for Leibowitz the instructive amusement that Franklin intended. Instead, he faults Franklin for falsifying his essential self

and demands of him, "But why did he advocate such devious policy . . . ?" Yet in Leibowitz's "postmodern" model, the self is made up, not by its actions, but precisely by "devious policy": as one constantly hears these days, the self is "invented," or "fabricated," the phrase in his title. Leibowitz refers to people "improvising identities" and to their "talent for trying on and discarding selves." He never hints that his two models of human identity contradict each other.

And, in one sense, they don't, because Leibowitz never considers his subjects' character as something built up through interchanges with others. He seems to suggest that the self—invented or given—is fundamentally individualistic, that it is independent of the society through which it moves in the bruising struggle for distinction. But surely this is not how Leibowitz's subjects understood themselves or narrated their lives. Introspective gazing was not the way they made sense of who they were: for Addams it was social work and social justice, for Wright race and politics, for Williams art and poetry, that created a context for what they'd done and linked them to others.

Fabricating Lives is an instructive and ultimately distorting book because its author evidently formulated the wrong question. It is not the quest for distinction, an isolating endeavor, that characterizes the majority of these eight autobiographies. Rather, it is a moral search for a life and work that can perhaps connect the self with something larger. Although it won her a Nobel Prize, Addams's work with the poor and society's "victims" began out of concern not for herself but for them. (Her autobiography rigidly excluded discussing most things that were merely personal.) Wright's adventures in radical politics were motivated by a more than personal indignation; so, even, were Goldman's. These autobiographies were a quest for "indistinction," an effort to merge their authors' solitary character into what was politically just, morally right, universally ideal, or aesthetically true. "The autobiographer is not only a 'who,' " as Robert Sayre observed, "he is also a 'what,' " and these life stories do not so much explore "identity" as they express Addams's and Wright's and Goldman's attempts to say what they believed in, what they lived and worked for. Sullivan's title, *The Autobiography of an Idea*, like the title *The Education of Henry Adams*, tells us this right off.

Specifically, six of the eight autobiographies (the exceptions are Stein and Dahlberg) are efforts to investigate, re-

late, defend, or somehow explain the idea of oneself by juxtaposing it to the idea of America. For, in addition to being a population and a landscape, "America" has from the start been a concept. Fitzgerald wrote that "France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still that quality of the idea, was harder to utter."

To judge by these autobiographies, America, or one's experience of America, can be hard to utter indeed. Here are eight wildly different experiments in expression; and the odder one's experience of America—Sullivan's inexplicable rejection by a democracy he accepted—the more curious the expression becomes. (Sullivan composed in an elaborate third-person style, constructing an edifice of ornate impersonality that was the exact opposite of his shabby, too personal failure.) Reconciling themselves with America—or failing to—provides a framework within which these writers, from Franklin to Wright, came to terms with themselves. Williams's criticism of Eliot's and Pound's expatriation justified, by implication, his remaining in America and the work he did here. When racism excluded Wright from the main body politic of America, he joined the Communist Party to create an alternative, idealized America that might include him equally. Autobiography in America slides so easily into autobiography with America.

Considered as visions of what connected their authors to the larger world, these autobiographies have an almost conclusive uneasiness about them. To wrestle with one's destiny in the terms of "America," as Wright did, exacts a great toll; to refuse to wrestle with it in those terms, as Dahlberg did, an even greater one. All these writers achieved renown; except for Franklin's, however, their autobiographies make that renown seemed riddled with self-doubt. Despite touting his own American "local" poetics, Williams in his autobiography was haunted by a secret fear of inconsequence. Stein's autobiography was haunted by the opposite ghost, by claims of her importance and influence which—as Braque and Matisse pointed out—distorted the facts maliciously.

More complex autobiographers than Stein or Williams are unfortunately omitted from Leibowitz's study. What we might have learned, if he had examined richer, denser material, if he had included for example the Henrys—Adams, Thoreau, and Miller. Each of them openly confessed what Stein or William dared not think, that he was a failure, out of step with America, an eyesore by its values. They understood that, despite

having the same name, "I," a narrator's aloof consciousness, and "I," a minor character performing questionable actions, might not be the same, but that through ironic deviousness each might redeem the other. And believing—as Montaigne had said—that everyone is "of such flighty and erratic character that neither he nor anyone else knew what kind of a man he was," Adams and Miller realized that a definitive or boastful statement could not do them justice, but an ironic one would. Certainly each of the Henrys, by his deployment of irony, made his "failure" look more desirable than any contemporary American success.

JEFFERY PAINE is literary editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

Ronald Reagan's decision to abandon his costly and dubious Strategic Defense Initiative.

Soviet history, too, would be replete with "unavoidable" milestones of enlightened leadership, such as Nikita Khrushchev's prudent acceptance of Eastern European nationalism by refusing to send tanks into Hungary in 1956.

ROBERT WEISBROT
Waterville, Maine

Disraeli's conversion (cont'd.)

To the editors:

William Addams Reitwiesner drastically misstates Benjamin Disraeli's personal conviction (Correspondence, February 12). As his many novels, speeches, and letters attest, Disraeli, who frequently stated, "All is race," also asserted that his religion could be found on the blank page between the Old and the New Testaments. Indeed, his ancestors were Jewish (his father and mother never converting), and he himself took exceptional pride in his people, sometimes outlandishly expressed. In response to anti-Semitic tirades in the House of Commons delivered against him by Daniel O'Connell, the future prime minister retorted: "Yes, I am a Jew, and when the ancestors of the Right Honorable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown land, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon."

Disraeli's Anglicanism was about as incere as the conversion of Henri Quatre to Roman Catholicism, and for pretty much the same reason: "Paris is worth a Mass."

SIDNEY HALPERN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TRB *continued from page 4*

wrong with different aspects of it keeping democracy on a longer or shorter string.

Furthermore, even the basic idea of democracy doesn't require that people be allowed to send whomever they want to Congress. Members make decisions affecting the whole country, not just their own districts. If the citizens of D.C. really want to re-elect Marion Barry as mayor, you might conclude that that's their business. If the citizens of South Carolina want to send Strom Thurmond back to the Senate for the 150th time, you might be tempted to say, "Wait a minute. That's my business, too."

But the term limitation idea is anti-democratic in more than the mechanistic sense. At bottom, it is based on the idea that elections are inherently corrupting and the less our leaders have to do with them—raising money, campaigning, bending to interest groups—the better. Taking the notion at its most high-minded, rather than as a mere partisan ploy, it is reminiscent of the fad that swept through Washington in the late 1970s, at the time of Jimmy Carter's malaise, for a six-year non-renewable presidential term. The concept was the same: we need politicians who don't care about politics.

What we need instead, I think, is citi-

zens who care more about politics. It does seem odd, at first blush, that a majority of Americans report themselves to pollsters as disgusted with Congress and eager to rejigger the Constitution to prevent incumbents from being re-elected, then that same majority goes to the polls and votes overwhelmingly to re-elect the incumbents. The explanation is that the voters are lazy hypocrites. And on this, as on more important subjects such as federal spending (where everyone is against it in the abstract and for it in the particular), the politicians are pandering to voters' hypocrisy and thereby encourage it.

Despite all the advantages of incumbency, it is still just as easy to vote against the incumbent as to vote for him, if you care enough. The Nicaraguans just gave us an inspiring demonstration. If, as Humphrey insists, congressional seats have become "personal fiefdoms," it is not because voters have been denied the freedom to vote the bastards out, but because they can't be bothered. Americans don't need and don't deserve another crutch for democracy, another way to express disdain for politics. They've got the Congress they voted for, and if they don't like it, they know what they can do about it.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

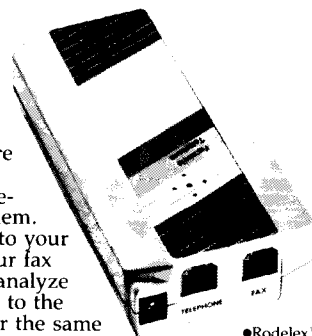
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NEW YORK DIARIST

Corporate populist

I GOT DECONSTRUCTED THE other day. It happened in a journal called *Critical Inquiry*. This quarterly, published by the University of Chicago, is heavily theoretical, in the academic style of the day. The articles it publishes tend toward elaborate hyphenated titles like "Ugly Duckling, Funny Butterfly: Bette Davis and *Now, Voyager*" by Stanley Cavell, with a "Postscript (1989): To Whom It May Concern." Whoever it is, it's not the uninitiated. Cavell, the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and the General Theory of Value at Harvard, seems to have elicited a rather substantial bibliography of his own: in a footnote to his "Postscript," he draws the reader's attention to a number of pertinent commentaries, among them Timothy Gould's "Where the Action Is: Stanley Cavell and the Skeptic's Activity," in *The Sense of Stanley Cavell*, and Karen Hanson's "Being Doubted, Being Assured," in *Images of Our Souls: Cavell, Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. The literature is large, Cavell acknowledges: "Evidently I must at once try to learn what it is Kristeva has said about 'the pre-oedipal, imaginary father,' cited by Modleski as from a 1982 lecture given by Kristeva (see 'TD,' p. 30 n. 22)."

NOTHING IS SIMPLE IN LIT CRIT these days. Indeed, the more popular the subject, the more abstruse the prose. Other articles in the current issue of *Critical Inquiry* include "Jasper Johns: Strategies for Making and Effacing Art" and (this is where I come in) "From Rhetoric to Corporate Populism: A Romantic Critique of the Academy in an Age of High Gossip" by Jerome Christensen, a professor of English at Johns Hopkins. Cavell's piece is enlivened by old movie stills of Katharine Hepburn and Bette Davis; "Corporate Populism" is illustrated with photographs from a story I wrote for *The New York Times Magazine* about the debate over the curriculum, titled "The Battle of the Books." What is "corporate populism"? The "phenomenon" is elusive, Professor Christensen admits, and "requires more explanation" than he can manage in the pages of *Critical Inquiry*. But he does give it the old college try. "Put succinctly, populism describes the endeavor to make an appeal to the broadest possible sector of readers in a manner os-

tensibly without ideological prejudice; corporate describes the organized body, the institutional capital, necessary to undertake and sustain this appeal." After some dense pages on Paul de Man and the Romantic poets, Yale critics and the CIA, Professor Christensen gets down to cases: "The Battle of the Books" is an illustration of how the media use their cultural power to enforce certain stereotypes. The way an article is packaged—the *fact* that it's packaged—makes the message superfluous: "The canon may be changed, even expanded, but there is still a canon, always a corporation. It is just that it now reflects no one's dominance, only the accumulation of free choices. Choices to what? To enjoy. To buy and enjoy."

DID I SAY THAT? BUT THEN, Professor Christensen isn't really concerned with what I said. What interests him is "the layout," which he subjects to complex scrutiny, even inviting the reader to deconstruct the periodical itself. ("Tear out figure 4 and place it adjacent to figure 6.") Indeed, the "text," to my annoyance, counts for very little with Professor Christensen. The real meaning is in the photographs: "The commodification of the literary theorist that the pictures perform is more important than the name, gender, class, or sexual orientation of their subject." A photograph of Stanford students demonstrating, for instance, is significant because the students are looking to the left. Get it? Note also that the photograph, which happens to be in black and white, faces a page with a color photograph on it. And what does this sequence represent? The progression "from black-and-white to color, from black to white, from consumer to commodity, from the Black Student Union to the 'facing' picture of Professor [Frank] Lentricchia, the object of desire that corporate populism in its enlightened colonialism has imagined for them." A photograph of another professor sitting on the steps with three students gets even more extensive treatment: "There are four people and two kinds of soft drink." What are they doing? They are "miming a democratic education," enacting an illusory freedom of choice: "Coke Classic or diet Coke? A minor choice, perhaps, representing merely a margin of enjoyment, but therefore all the more democratic. Do not ask why. It is the culture in which we are being 'instructed.' How to choose? Coke Classic is, of course, sensationally designed to epitomize a 'theory' that wants to open up the canon to anything that we enjoy (and Coke is that which by consensus makes us an enjoying 'we'), while preserving the nominal name of the 'classic' ". . . And so on, through a page-long paragraph that manages to invoke Chaucer and Thomas

De Quincey, sitcoms and synecdoche. Somehow it all adds up to a deep reading of the ideological message lurking behind the juxtaposition of photographs and text—"the picture of corporate populism." Do not ask why.

WHAT IS PROFESSOR CHRISTENSEN actually saying? Reading between the lines (no easy matter)—that a picture is worth a thousand words. "By 'picturability' I do not merely refer to the capacity of something to be visualized but also its aptitude to be set within a series of similar images strung together by a corporate structure interested in an appeal to an amassing audience, an answerable body (a student body) which is dedicated to the pleasurable consumption of images." And I thought I was just writing an article for a magazine. In the words of Gertrude Stein, "Interesting if true." But is it? Professor Christensen maintains that the students in the Stanford photograph are looking to the left, a fact to which he attaches ideological significance. But doesn't the image reverse things? In reality, the students were looking to the right. Well, never mind. This is how criticism is written in the university. It's a profession in decline. There are no general critics around of the stature of Edmund Wilson; instead of literary journalists, we have reviewers. The man of letters is as obsolete as the blacksmith.

THE FACT IS, WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE is no longer an occupation central to our society. The audience just isn't there. Universities have absorbed what was once a form of discourse available to a small but eager public. And the less important it is, the more technical it becomes, as if to compensate for its loss of status. Literary criticism was always a marginal practice; the circulation of *Kenyon Review* at its height was about the same, suspect, as the circulation of *Critical Inquiry*. But it had an influence far beyond its numbers. Why? Because the critics who contributed to it were lucid, for one thing Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom were knotty theoreticians, too, but they wrote in the plain style, and prided themselves on doing so; their essays were intended to give pleasure. And they did.

ONE LESSON OF THE CONTROVERSY over Paul de Man, concludes Professor Christensen, is that "we will each be held responsible for the way we are represented in the newspaper." An admirable sentiment; but I'm not sure he believes it.

JAMES ATLAS

James Atlas is an editor at *The New York Times Magazine*.

*In Bangkok, good things come
in enormous packages.*

There was a time in Thailand when pachyderms meant political power, and a white elephant was worth its weight in gold. While times have changed—elephants today are used to symbolize good luck instead of wealth—there are still a number of big surprises in store for the businessman in old Siam.

Mai pen rai.

Pronounced “my pen rye,” this is translated as “it doesn’t matter,” and it conveys the Thai attitude toward business and life as well. It means it’s best to avoid open

conflicts and negotiate patiently—shouting will get you nowhere.

Shy Thais.

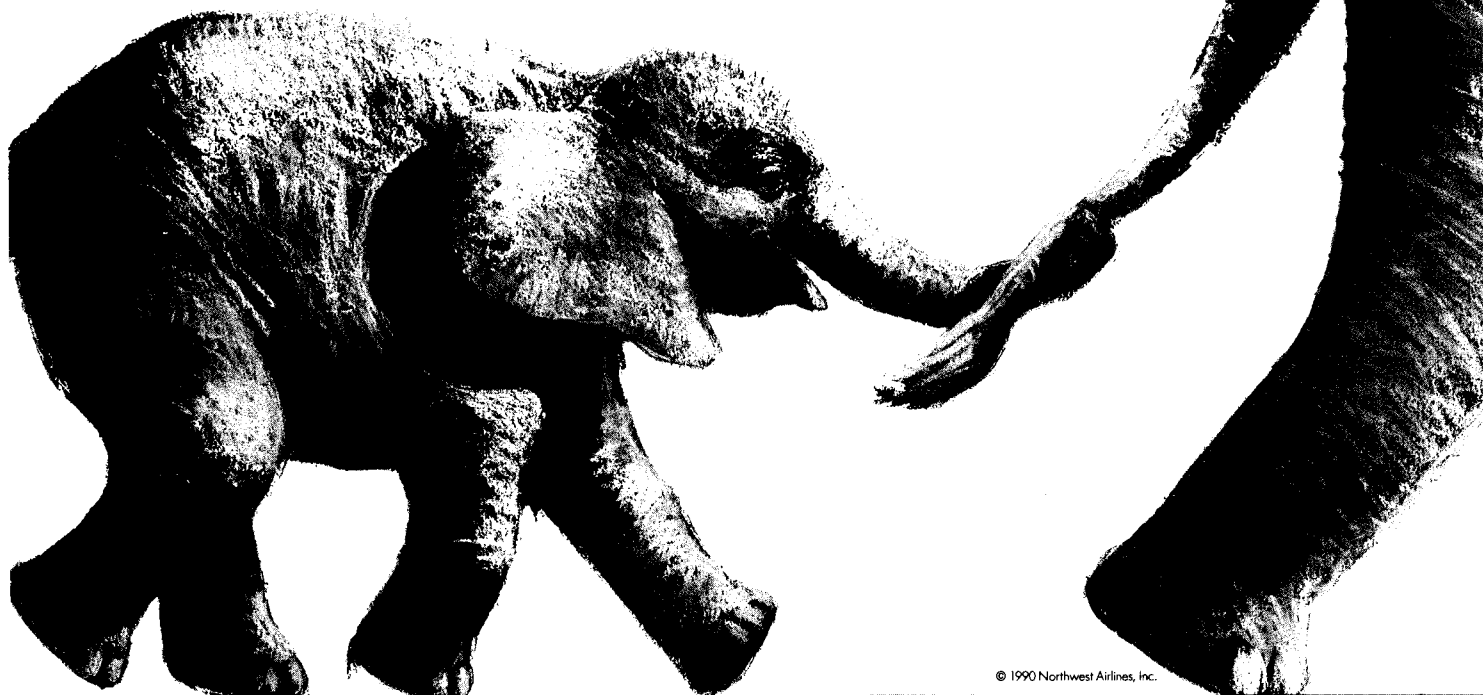
Thais seldom invite foreigners home—entertaining is done in restaurants. Use a private dining room at the Oriental Hotel (tel. 236-0400) for special occasions.

The how of the wai.

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